

# *The* Reading Teacher

RUSSELL G. STAUFFER, *Editor*

University of Delaware

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# The Reading Teacher

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THEME OF THIS ISSUE

Diagnosis of Reading Problems  
with Classroom Materials

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# The Reading Teacher

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## All Good Teaching

IS ALL good teaching diagnostic, or creative, or both? It has been said that all good teaching is diagnostic. And this is to mean that, as teaching is being done and learning is being accomplished, the teacher is observing and recording individual needs. In turn, the needs are to serve as the basis for effective instruction.

Three words closely related in meaning to diagnosis are: *scrutinize*, *experience*, and *confirm*. To *scrutinize* means to give close attention to minute detail, to look at or over in a critical and searching manner. *Experience* suggests a practical, as opposed to a speculative, way of finding out—one that requires personal knowledge and practice. To *confirm* means to know the truth and attest to it, by understanding its genuineness, accuracy, or validity.

To teach diagnostically does, therefore, imply a thorough knowledge of: What is reading? What is a mature reader? What are the habits and skills needed to do flexible, adaptive reading in life-related situations? To teach diagnostically also implies that the observing and recording are being done constantly (wherever reading is being done)—and on an individual basis. Furthermore, it implies that material for

diagnosis consists of whatever is being read for whatever purposes have been declared.

If the axiom "good teaching is diagnostic" becomes too negative in its impact, it can be purged and imbued with the dynamics of creativity. Laura Zirbes in *Spurs to Creative Teaching* presents interesting contrasting characteristics concerned with the educational *status quo*. To do creative teaching, she says (to list but a few of her proposals), means to advance:

from stereotyped conformity toward free expression,

from imposed direction toward cooperative planning,

from mass handling toward individual guidance,

from submissive acquiescence toward wholehearted involvement,

from restrictive domination toward responsible self-direction,

from stultifying repression toward spontaneity.

If training for responsible reading behavior is to be developed, would it be unrealistic to assume that both creative teaching and diagnostic teaching reinforce each other and lead to a dynamic personal and cultural fulfillment?—R. G. S.

# Specific Principles Essential to Classroom Diagnosis

by WILLIAM D. SHELDON  
● SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

THE CLASSROOM teacher usually recognizes that children vary in reading skills and in their ability to learn to read. Although most teachers are familiar with various tests and ways of assessing reading status, they also need to understand certain basic principles of diagnosis and how to apply these principles in the classroom.

## Specific Principles of Diagnosis

The following specific principles of diagnosis need to be understood by each teacher:

1. Diagnosis is an essential aspect of teaching and is a preliminary step to sound instruction.

2. Diagnosis should be continuous because child growth in reading depends upon the sequential development of skills, which is promoted through the teacher's knowledge of each child's progress.

3. Diagnosis is an individual task and reflects the fact that each child is different.

4. Diagnosis of reading status demands far more than an assessment of reading because reading difficulties are symptomatic of many causative factors.

5. Because reading is but one aspect of language, teachers must understand the listening, speaking, and writing status of children to fully understand their reading abilities.

6. Because the instruments of diagnosis have not been perfected, the limitation of each instrument must be thoroughly understood.

After considering the principles of sound diagnostic procedures many teachers throw up their hands in despair and say that they cannot diagnose. They suggest that diagnosis is beyond them. It is our contention that teachers can and must diagnose if an analysis of reading problems is to be accomplished (14). We shall consider each principle and develop ways in which the principles can be applied in practice by every teacher.

## Diagnosis an Essential Preliminary

*Diagnosis is an essential aspect of teaching and is a preliminary step to sound instruction.* Diagnosis as a first step in lesson planning suggests two things:

1. Lessons in reading must be planned with a specific understanding of each child's limitations in reading in mind. This means that formal and informal tests are needed to pinpoint the actual level on which each child can profit from instruction.

2. As teachers gain precision in evaluating the reading status of children, instruction will tend to become more specific, and instructional groups will be limited in size. Specific teaching means that provision

will be made within each lesson for the reintroduction in a new context of words not mastered in previous lessons or a reemphasis on the learning of an analytic skill which is not applied properly in new lessons. There is also considerable flexibility in such teaching. Instead of following completely a pre-planned lesson, teachers adjust to pupils' learning of each new skill and provide for more review of difficult skills than would ordinarily be provided to more able readers.

For the ordinary child whose reading is developing in a more or less normal manner, four aspects of reading must be assessed:

1. *Understanding of concepts* related to each specific lesson. Teachers can assess concept development by giving each child an opportunity to discuss the new ideas in a lesson. It is especially important that pupils be allowed to relate the new ideas to their own understanding by recounting experiences they have had which are similar to those in the story. Sometimes children indicate their understanding of concepts by supplying synonyms for the word or phrase which has fixed the concept.

2. *Understanding of specific meanings* of known words as used in the new lesson and a clear understanding of new words met for the first time in the lesson. An accurate understanding of word meaning is basic to good comprehension. It is particularly important for teachers to explain words which have a different meaning in a new context. Arousing the curiosity of children

about specific word meaning contributes also to the development of critical thinking in reading.

3. *Ability to attack new words* through one of the analytic techniques. Most reading lessons develop an eclectic approach to word analysis. This means that whenever opportunities for using phonetic or structural analysis or contextual clues arise that teachers should lead children to use the varied analytic skills. In so doing teachers increase skill and flexibility in word analysis. For more mature readers it is wise to encourage whenever appropriate the use of glossaries and dictionaries in analyzing new words.

4. *Ability to comprehend* the material read and to answer questions about it. It is important that a constant check be made of the pupils' understanding of what they read. Such aspects of comprehension as understanding the main idea and related details, interpreting the author's meaning and reacting critically to what is read must be developed in daily instruction.

In summary then, the first principle of diagnosis is recognized when teachers plan their daily lessons to meet the reading needs of each child in a precise manner.

### Diagnosis Continuous

*Diagnosis should be continuous because child growth in reading depends upon the sequential development of skills, which is promoted through the teacher's knowledge of each child's progress. Continuous diagnosis indicates a need for evalu-*

ating children carefully before instruction begins and then continuing the diagnosis on a daily, weekly, and term basis. First steps in diagnosis can involve the rather routine practice of studying the records which previous teachers have made on each child. At the first-grade level scores from reading readiness tests are usually available. Also of value in the appraisal of each pupil are measures of mental maturity. Often the most important contributions to first-grade teachers is the knowledge obtained from the written comments of kindergarten teachers concerning the observed over-all learning status and capacities of each child.

The next step in diagnosis involves careful and studious reaction to each child as first lessons are taught. When children find new concepts difficult to deal with in their reading, stumble over words taught in previous lessons, fail to isolate a simple main idea or detail, then the sensitive teacher is aware in general of the need for instructing the children in less difficult material. Sometimes children have specific problems which can be resolved by careful re-teaching. Careful diagnosis during initial teaching is of the greatest importance. It is our contention that poor reading is actually encouraged when teachers instruct children on too difficult a level. Many reading specialists feel that if each child were taught on his instructional level, with this instructional level frequently reassessed, reading failures would be reduced substantially and children would enjoy reading.

While teachers can do a day-by-day diagnosis during actual teaching by listening to children read and connecting their written reactions to reading, it is also important that more elaborate periodic checks be made of progress. Certainly no book or reading level should be deemed mastered until a thorough check is made of vocabulary studied, word analysis skills learned, and comprehension of materials is assessed. This testing or evaluation is best done through informal tests which are based on the books read and the lessons taught.

For example, after a certain book is read, a check could be made of each child's recognition of every fifth new word in the book. A short test of the child's ability to actually apply newly learned word analysis skills can be made from the skills taught in the lesson. The recognition of the silent letters in vowel digraphs might be reviewed, or the ability to note differences between long and short vowels can be checked. If a new rule of syllabication has been taught, a check can be made of it in practice.

A more elaborate diagnosis can be made at the end of a term. The instruments used can consist of teacher-made tests based on actual materials read, informal inventories such as those described by Betts (2), Dolch (5), Harris (8), and others. Formal inventories such as the Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty (6), McKee's Phonetic Inventory (12), and other tests of this type can be used. An even more formal

assessment can be made by the use of standardized reading tests which, although limited in terms of the diagnosis of individuals, have certain values as gross gauges of progress.

### Diagnosis an Individual Task

*Diagnosis is an individual task and reflects the fact that each child is different.* To diagnose, the teacher must consider the individual child. This means that time must be set aside for diagnosis both during the daily lesson and at the end of such time periods as those suggested above. Informal reading inventories such as those suggested by Betts (2), can be the most important diagnostic instruments in the classroom teacher's kit.

The informal inventory can be constructed by selecting passages from graded reading books which have not been read by children prior to the testing. Two selections of 100-150 words in length can be selected from each reader, or a selection can be written using the vocabulary of specific readers. One selection is used to test oral reading while the other is used as a measure of silent reading. Teachers note the kinds of errors children make while reading orally and use the errors as a guide for corrective instruction. Such errors as omissions, substitutions, reversals, repetitions, ignoring punctuation, incorrect phrasing are all noted during oral reading.

Comprehension of the materials read silently is measured through questions asked following the reading. These questions demand an

understanding of the main idea, related details, the sequence of ideas, and the understanding of ideas not directly stated by the writer.

Teachers can receive from the suggested references some guidance in evaluating the level on which children read. However, the decision as to whether a child is frustrated by what he reads, is not challenged by the material, or needs instruction to read successfully is left up to the judgment of the teacher.

### Diagnosis More Than Reading Assessment

*Diagnosis of reading status demands far more than an assessment of reading because reading problems are symptomatic of many causative factors.* It is important that classroom teachers realize that many resources outside the classroom are needed for a complete assessment of children. Teachers need to know the nature of the reading problem if children are showing signs of distress during reading instruction. An ability to classify readers as corrective or remedial, as differentiated from the normal or developmental, can be strengthened through reading (1, 8, 9, 15).

Kress (11) describes the child with a corrective problem as one who "may be retarded in reading anywhere from a few months to several years below his expected grade level of achievement, as estimated by an individual intelligence test. For this child, the principal deterring factor, which inhibits progress in reading, is the inability of his classroom

teacher to instruct the child on a level within his present range of word recognition and comprehension skills. The child's problem may involve inadequacies in experience background, concept development, word recognition, and/or word comprehension, but there is no basic neurological or psychological learning difficulty present.

"The remedial reader is quite a different type of learning problem. If the difficulty is identified early, the extent of retardation in reading may be no greater than that found in mild corrective problems. However, the child with a remedial problem, in addition to being faced with the same inhibiting factor as found in the corrective category, is handicapped by a basic neurological or psychological difficulty.

"A child in this category has an associative learning problem. When the usual teaching techniques are employed, the child cannot relate meaning from his own experience background to the symbols-words which he is trying to learn."

A teacher is well on his way to sophistication in diagnosis when he recognizes that a child has serious problems needing corrective or remedial treatment rather than a simple problem which would respond to more carefully presented developmental lessons. While the teacher might not know how to diagnose the more serious difficulties nor know how to treat them, he should be able to recognize when children have serious problems.

Classroom teachers can look to the

school physician and psychologist to provide help in the diagnosis of general health and emotional status. A thorough diagnosis by experienced clinicians can also provide more clues of the child's intellectual and neurological status. The classroom teacher is not expected to perform the diagnostic functions of the physician, psychologist, or neurologist, but we can expect the teacher to be well enough acquainted with children to know when the severity of a reading problem warrants a more complex diagnosis than he can provide.

### Reading and Language Arts

*Because reading is but one aspect of language, teachers must understand the listening, speaking, and writing status of children to fully understand their reading abilities.* The relationship among the various language arts must be thoroughly understood by teachers before they can fully appreciate the child's problem in reading. Corrective or remedial reading instruction is a questionable procedure when the basic problem of a child is his inability to listen adequately or speak our language with fluency.

It is probable that the isolated teaching and diagnosis of reading has been due to the emphasis upon reading instruction that has not taken into full consideration the place of reading in the development of language. Certainly a meager listening and speaking background will account for much of the difficulty children have in reading. An inability

to write adequately is also related to a general language problem. Certainly an understanding of the structure of our language gained through both listening and reading will be reflected in the child's ability to write in a correct manner.

Teachers should make a special effort to assess the listening abilities of children. The assessment can be made through informal means, such as reading to children and then observing their reactions. If a child can re-tell or dramatize a story which has been read to him we can gain some appreciation of his ability to listen. The teacher might also give commands or directions and observe the child's ability to respond. A more formal assessment of listening ability can be obtained through the STEP Listening Test (4). Early primary teachers have been provided many excellent measures of listening through lessons found in so-called readiness booklets.

It is of first importance that teachers of bilingual children, or children who come from deprived homes, study the listening ability of children to make sure that the words introduced in reading are part of the listening vocabulary.

Speaking ability can be determined through daily contact with children. However, a word of caution is in order here. It has been our experience that a few children often monopolize the speaking opportunities in a group or class. Records kept by teachers of the conversation of children in their classes frequently reveal that a relatively few children

monopolize these discussions. An informal assessment of speaking ability has been devised by Sylvia Jones (10). She has selected a series of colorful, action-filled pictures of scenes with which most first-grade children are familiar. Mrs. Jones has given these pictures (6) to individual children and asked them to tell her about the pictures. The notes of what each child has said not only indicate the fluency of the children but the wide range of their concepts, vocabulary, and general understanding.

Informal tests of writing are also needed to round out the understanding of the general language skills of children. A knowledge of the listening, speaking, and writing ability of children will not only give teachers a better understanding of the reasons for reading disabilities, but will also serve to focus attention on the fact that reading cannot be taught in isolation. Reading must be presented in a general language development setting.

### Limitations of Diagnostic Tests

*Because the instruments of diagnosis have not been perfected, the limitation of each instrument must be thoroughly understood.* It is recommended that teachers study the tests they use to assess the status of children in order to become fully aware of uses and limitations of the tests. If a test has been reviewed in *Buros' Mental Measurement Yearbook* (3), then it is helpful to read the critique of the test in this volume. The more sophisticated test expert

often pinpoints limitations of tests and indicates strengths or weaknesses not always obvious to the teacher.

In using informal inventories in which comprehension is checked by rather simple questions of detail, it is interesting to discover how many questions children answer correctly without fully understanding the material.

The range of scores which can be obtained by giving two or three different reading or intelligence tests to the same child should also be noted (13). Some teachers have discovered that certain formal reading tests have a limited ceiling and are not adequate as a measuring instrument for the more able children in a class. Teachers have found that other tests yield reading scores which might represent a grade placement one or two years higher than that on which children can read with understanding.

It is important that teachers become well acquainted with the formal and informal tests used in the assessment of children. The limitations of tests should be understood in terms of the children being tested. Teacher judgment also needs critical examination. If tests measure inadequately, it is the teacher who must detect the inadequacy, and it is the teacher who must provide a further measure of skill.

If children are to be properly taught they must be diagnosed accurately. Teachers can diagnose the reading status of their children to a limited degree by adhering to a few

basic principles. When the limited diagnostic ability of teachers needs supplementing, then teachers must be well enough informed to call in the necessary help in order to obtain a more accurate estimate.

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# Reading Inventories for Classroom Use

by MARJORIE SEDDON JOHNSON  
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GOOD TEACHING is dependent on understanding of those to be taught. Planning for reading instruction is, therefore, impossible without thorough investigation of each pupil's present level of achievement, his capacity for achievement, and his specific strengths and weaknesses. The classroom teacher must make an evaluation, in all of these areas, of each pupil in his group. He can accomplish this task most efficiently through the use of informal inventories.

## Nature of Informal Inventories

Standardized tests rate an individual's performance as compared to the performance of others. By contrast, an informal inventory appraises the individual's level of competence on a particular job without reference to what others do. It is designed to determine how well *he* can do the job. Materials of known difficulty are used to find out if he can or cannot read them adequately. Inventories can be administered on an individual or a group basis. For general classroom use the group inventory is most desirable, except for those pupils whose status cannot be appraised adequately without a complete clinical inventory. For them, the evaluation may depend on an individual word recognition test and reading inventory.

In either case, the child reads material at known levels and responds

to questions designed to measure his understanding of what he has read. When group procedures are used, material at one level only is usually employed for each test. When an individual inventory is administered, materials at successively higher levels are read until the pupil reaches the point at which he can no longer function adequately. In both cases specific abilities can be evaluated at the same time that information is obtained on the appropriate difficulty level of materials for independent reading, instruction, and listening activities. Getting all this information through group inventory techniques may require a number of sessions with reading at various levels. However, with either procedure the teacher has an opportunity to determine levels and needs in the only logical way—by seeing how the pupil functions in an actual reading situation.

## Purposes

If instruction has the object of helping the child improve his performance, it must begin at his present functioning level. The first purpose of the inventory, therefore, is to find the correct level for instruction. Does the particular pupil need to begin work at primer, third reader, sixth level? Where is the point at which he has needs which require instructional help and at which he can profit from it?

Not all work which the child does should be dependent on instructional aid. He should have opportunities to apply the abilities he has acquired, to function under his own direction, and to practice so that he can develop a more facile performance. All of this must be done at a level where he can achieve virtual perfection without assistance. A second purpose of the inventory, then, is to determine the highest level at which the individual can read well on his own, his independent level.

Reading ability is not an entity, but rather a composite of a large number of specific abilities. Improvements in reading performance, therefore, can be brought about only as the individual gains greater grasp of needed abilities. Before plans can be made to help a pupil, the teacher must determine what causes him trouble, etc. A third purpose of the inventory is to get this information on each child's specific assets and liabilities in the total picture of his reading ability.

Many factors, in addition to the language and thinking abilities, influence the child's performance in reading. How well is he able to attend and concentrate? What does he expect to get from reading? How does he respond to ideas presented by others? How much background of information and experience does he have to bring to the reading? How efficiently does he use his background? A fourth purpose of the inventory is to find answers to these and other related questions.

### Procedures

For evaluating in group situations, the first step is to make an estimate of the possible instructional level of each child. Many kinds of data can be gotten from cumulative records, former teachers, and observations of daily performance. From these sources comes the information on which the hypothesis about instructional levels is made. Perhaps in a sixth-grade class, for instance, a teacher decides tentatively that he may have one group ready for instruction at fourth level, another at fifth, a third at sixth, and a fourth somewhere above sixth. In addition, he feels that four of his pupils are quite far below the others in achievement, but is uncertain about definite levels.

He might proceed by selecting a good piece of reading material at sixth level and preparing himself thoroughly for using it as an inventory. This preparation would include all of the attention to vocabulary, word recognition problems, thinking abilities, etc., which would be given to a piece of material to be used for an instructional reading activity. When his preparation is complete, he is ready to begin the inventory for those whose instructional levels are approximately at sixth reader.

When this group is assembled for the inventory, the over-all plan for the activity will vary little from that for any good instructional reading activity. The differences lie in matters of emphasis. The objective is not to teach, but rather to find out

if this material would be suitable for teaching. The basic question to be answered for each pupil is this: "Can he profit from instruction in this material?" Each phase of the reading activity, therefore, must be slanted toward evaluation. Actual teaching would be done only to see how well various individuals can respond to instruction given at this level. Thus any instruction given in the inventory situation is actually for purposes of further evaluation.

During the readiness or preparatory period of the group inventory the teacher may use a variety of techniques and materials. His objectives are the following: to evaluate the pupils' background of relevant experiences and their ability to use these experiences, to see how many relevant concepts they have at their disposal, to determine whether or not they have a grasp of the vocabulary used in this material to express essential concepts, to evaluate their ability to perform whatever thinking processes are involved in understanding the selection, and to determine the degree of interest they show. These same objectives guide the evaluative phase of an instructional directed reading activity. In both inventory and instructional activity these objectives will be achieved only if the teacher allows freedom for the pupils to reveal themselves—their interests, concepts, vocabulary, experiences, thinking abilities, attention, etc. As the teacher guides the activity he must not become the dispenser of information, the judge of ideas presented. He may stimulate group dis-

cussion through use of what he knows about the children's backgrounds, materials read previously, pictures accompanying the material to be read currently, concrete objects rich in stimulus value, or countless other things related to the chosen material.

In the inventory no attempt would be made to fill all the discovered gaps. For some of the pupils taking the inventory, deficiencies in experience, vocabulary, concepts, or thinking abilities, for instance, might be so severe that instruction in this material would be impossible. For them the essential question has already been answered—sixth reader is too high for instruction. Depending on the total classroom situation at the moment, they might be dropped from the reading inventory to go on with some other activity or continue in it even though no more evaluation of their performance at this level is necessary. If they continue, the teacher is obligated to see that it is not a frustrating experience for them and that their inability to function is not evident to all to a debilitating degree.

For those pupils who seem able to proceed with the material the preparatory phase would continue with some developmental work. Clarification or development of concepts, introduction of essential vocabulary, guidance in thinking processes, etc., might be undertaken. Students would be guided toward the establishment of purposes for reading. All this would be done to further the evaluation—to see how well they can profit from this help and apply it during

the rest of the reading activity.

Once the preparation has been completed and purposes for reading established, the second phase of the activity begins. Pupils read the material silently to satisfy the purposes they set up. Now the teacher has an opportunity to observe their performance. Some may proceed with no difficulty—reading at an acceptable rate, reflecting their understanding in their expressions, stopping when they have achieved what they set out to do. Others may exhibit various symptoms of difficulty—frowning, lip movement, finger pointing, requesting frequent help, and many others. Some may take an inordinate amount of time as they struggle along. All the things the teacher sees and hears during this silent reading period will become part of the data on which he bases his final evaluation. If pupils want to ask questions, he will be available. From the questions they ask and the comments they make to him he may discover a great deal about the strengths and weaknesses in their performance.

When the silent reading has been completed, group discussion will focus on the purposes established for reading. Here the teacher will have an opportunity to discover how well various individuals satisfied these purposes. Rereading, both oral and silent, may occur spontaneously or be done on request. Appraisal can be made of oral reading performance, ability to locate information, ability to determine relevancy of ideas, etc. Questions other than those

raised in the original purposes can be asked to allow for more nearly complete evaluation of each individual's understanding of the material and his handling of the word recognition problems.

By the time the preparatory phase, silent reading, discussion, and rereading have been completed, the teacher should have clear evidence of each child's ability or inability to profit from instruction at this level. About those who can function adequately with his instructional aid, he should have a great deal of additional information. He may have noted that one had difficulty getting meaning from a context clue expressed in an appositional phrase. Another may have needed help with handling the *ti* element in words like *partial*. A third may have had trouble with two vowels together when they are in two separate syllables. A fourth may have trouble with a sequence based on order of importance. In other words, the teacher may have discovered a great deal about the specific needs of these pupils he is going to instruct at sixth level. At the same time, he undoubtedly learned much on the positive side as he observed the things they were able to do well and the readiness they had for additional learnings.

About those who handled everything independently, spontaneously, and virtually perfectly at sixth level, the teacher may know only that he must check them at a higher level. He has not seen their needs because they are not evident at the independent level. About those for whom this

material was much too difficult, he may know little more than that he must check them at a lower level. He could not appraise their skills and abilities because they were in so much trouble that they were unable to apply even those they had. Evaluation of specific needs would have to wait for the inventory at the instructional level.

During succeeding periods the same procedures would be followed with other groups and other materials. Those for whom sixth reader materials had been too difficult might become part of groups being checked at fourth or fifth. Those for whom sixth had been too easy might be checked at seventh or eighth. Even after all the group inventories are completed, additional information might be needed on some pupils. It would be to these that individual inventories would be administered. This might well mean making special arrangements outside the classroom setting.

### Materials

For both group and individual inventories materials must be ones of known difficulty level. Each piece of material should be a meaningful unit, not a disjointed portion of a longer selection. It should offer the possibility of evaluating important skills and abilities. It should not be material with which the pupil is already familiar.

Many types of material can be used. Selections from basal readers, graded texts in the content areas, "news papers" designed for pupil

use—all these and many others are among the choices. For the group inventory in the classroom one might well use selections from the very texts being considered for use. In this way a direct answer can be gotten to the immediate question—"Is *this book* suitable instruction material for *this child*?"

If a science teacher wants to determine his pupils' instructional levels for science work, he needs good science material for his inventory. The question, however, might be this: "What level should this child be using for his light, recreational reading?" In that case, the inventory should be done with story-type material. In other words, the material must be pertinent to the purpose for which the evaluation is being made.

### Summary

Reading needs can be diagnosed only through observation of reading performance. Instruction can be planned effectively only on the basis of such diagnostic study. Through group reading activities conducted with the stress on evaluation the good classroom teacher can determine appropriate levels for independent and instructional work. Having found the right level for instruction, he can appraise each child's strengths and weaknesses and plan to meet his needs. All this can be accomplished with classroom materials by any alert, sensitive teacher who knows his pupils, knows a reading program, and knows his materials for the informal inventory.

## Clinical Diagnosis in the Classroom

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**B**EFORE ACTUAL diagnosis of reading problems can be undertaken in the classroom, a clear-cut definition of the problem is essential. What is a severely retarded reader? How much retardation must be present to justify intensive remedial work? When can we say that a pupil really needs such help? We must have certain definite criteria in mind if we are to avoid dissipating those few hours the average teacher has to devote to her retarded readers.

For these reasons we offer the following definition: "An individual who is retarded in a number of reading skills by one year or more, if in the primary grades, or by two years or more if older, below that reading level necessary for full participation in the reading tasks of his age or socio-economic group may be considered a case of reading disability. It is assumed that he has had normal opportunities for schooling, and that he has continued to show this degree of retardation below his estimated capacity despite corrective efforts extending over a period of months" (11).

This definition eliminates wasted motion in diagnosis and remediation of pupils who: (1) show trouble with a single reading skill, such as rate, (2) are functioning on a reading level which permits them to participate reasonably well in school or their society, (3) are illiterate be-

cause of lack of schooling, (4) have shown temporary difficulty which will probably respond to classroom corrective efforts, or (5) are achieving at a level reasonably close to their estimated capacities

Rigorous application of this definition of reading disability results in a selection of those pupils in whom a real reading handicap exists. Complete clinical diagnosis would be attempted only with these pupils. Children with simple reading problems, identified in the course of applying these criteria, would not be diagnosed. Instead these problems would be attacked by classroom adjustments such as changes in reading materials, small group instruction, change in grade placement, intensive training in a specific skill, or the use of more realistic academic standards.

Preliminary steps to reading diagnosis would include the administration of group tests of reading and intelligence. The reading test should yield separate scores in at least the three areas of rate, vocabulary and comprehension so that the breadth of the reading difficulty may be determined. A supplementary test of phonic and word-attack skills such as the *Doren* (6), the *Roswell-Chall* (9), the Committee on Diagnostic Reading Tests *Word Attack*, *Silent Test* (5), or the *Silent Reading Diagnostic Tests* (1) would sample other important reading abilities.

The intelligence test should, of course, be free from the influence of the pupil's reading skills and therefore involve little or no reading. The non-language section of the *California Mental Maturity* (3), the *Revised Beta Examination* (8), the *Chicago Non-Verbal* (4), or portions of the *SRA Primary Mental Abilities* (10) are suitable. These can readily be administered by the classroom teacher.

Since the intelligence test results are only a crude guide to the reading capacities of the pupil, we prefer to estimate capacity by a formal or informal measure of listening, or auditory comprehension. This test, in our opinion, provides a better reflection of the pupil's language and socioeconomic opportunities than the intelligence test. The *Brown-Carlsen Listening Comprehension* (2) or the *Silent and Auditory Comprehension* of the Committee on Diagnostic Reading Tests (5) may be used, or an informal test such as that described later.

These preliminary tests would differentiate severely retarded readers from those needing corrective efforts. The test scores would show the degree of retardation in comparison with capacity, and the extent of retardation in various skills. These facts when considered in relation to the school history would identify pupils in need of careful diagnosis.

### Diagnostic Steps

*Physical factors.* Although they are not frequently a major cause of reading disability, certain physical

factors must be explored. Information regarding significant variation in nutrition, hearing, metabolism, chronic ailments and general physical development may be obtained from the records of the school nurse or family physician. Unfortunately, vision tests done by these medical personnel are often completely inadequate for reading diagnosis. All too often, only tests of visual acuity at twenty feet are given, and the results are irrelevant to vision at reading distance. In these instances teachers should refer pupils to a local optometrist for complete vision testing. In those cases of reading disability in which the physical factors seem important, the teacher can secure some advice from medical and optometric advisers regarding the adjustment of the remedial program to the pupil's handicaps.

*Personality.* Most of the effective personality tests require more training for their interpretation than the average teacher possesses. For this reason teachers are well advised to depend upon observational and interview techniques and their knowledge of child development and personality dynamics, while they are learning more about the technical testing of personality. Teachers should attempt to have pupils talk or write about (1) their feelings about reading, (2) the values (if any) they find in reading, and (3) their needs and interests that could be appealed to through reading. The teacher will try to understand what part reading plays in the child's self-concept, how he evaluates himself as a reader, and

what reading success means to him now and in the future.

Patterns of attitudes toward reading and, therefore, of reading development are established in children as early as the end of the first grade, as recent studies show. These attitudes often explain why a pupil feels he cannot succeed in reading, or they may actually determine how he reads. For example, the child may read haltingly because of anxiety, lack of self-confidence, or distaste for reading, while the older pupil may read slowly for these same reasons and also because of neurotic perfectionism, rigidity, or ingrained habit. In other words, before we can attempt to correct the pupil's reading performances, we must try to understand how these reflect his ideas about himself and reading.

Insights into the poor reader's self-concept and his emotionalized attitudes toward reading cannot be quickly and completely obtained by a single formal personality test, even in the hands of a psychologist. Careful observation of the pupil's behavior, comments and reactions to reading on numerous occasions are necessary. His spontaneous conversation and stories of his relationships with school and teachers will provide additional clues. Among older pupils, an autobiography of reading experiences, or compositions on such topics as their ambitions, unpleasant experiences in school, most enjoyable book, etc., provide leads which may be followed up by teacher-pupil discussion.

*Sociological factors.* Reading is as

much a sociological process as it is a psychological or personal one. The reading habits of the pupil reflect the attitudes of the family, the community, and even the school. Therefore, before we can expect to help the poor reader perform at what we consider a normal level, we must understand what is normal for his environmental setting. What are the attitudes of his parents toward his reading? What part does reading play in the family's leisure-time activities? Has his schooling gone beyond mechanical instruction in reading to reading as a useful, pleasant activity? What shall our goals for this child's future uses of reading be, in view of these environmental facts? We should certainly attempt to improve the status symbols of breadth of reading, verbal fluency, reading tastes and interests. But we must recognize that these must be realistically related to the probable uses of reading for this child now and in the future in his environmental setting.

*Choice of teaching approach.* One aspect often neglected in diagnosis of reading problems is an objective determination of the pupil's aptitude for learning by various instructional methods. The decision to use the visual, phonic, or kinesthetic method, or some combination of these, is frequently based simply on the teacher's preference for the method. In fact, if we read the remedial literature, quite often there doesn't seem to have been any question of this point, for the pupil is given remedial training by the same visual

method under which he has previously failed.

The nonreader's or the primary reader's ability to profit from these various teaching approaches can be evaluated by the classroom teacher. The Learning Methods Test (7) will accomplish this distinction for individuals or small groups. Briefly, the test consists of a series of four trial lessons in word recognition, each taught by a different method. By the use of comparable words in each lesson, and by the simple testing of actual learning at the end of the lesson and after one day, the appropriate method for each pupil may be discovered. Some pupils do not show significantly greater learning aptitude for any one method. But, on the other hand, many pupils do exhibit a strong tendency in this series of simple trial lessons which any teacher can conduct.

*Informal tests.* In addition to the facts obtained from the group reading tests mentioned earlier, the teacher will undoubtedly desire information regarding other reading skills. This testing may well be accomplished by informal, teacher-constructed instruments, since few commercial tests are available for assessment of abilities in the content fields or in study skills.

For reading in the content fields, a series of graded selections can be used to estimate silent reading comprehension levels and rate of reading. A parallel set of passages will function for the measurement of listening, or auditory comprehension in this same area. Auditory comprehension level will reveal the pupil's potential

for reading in this field, or the possibility of improvement from remedial training. Knowledge of the technical vocabulary of a content field may be sampled by a test constructed with the aid of the glossary of the text. A test of matching definition to one of a group of words is simpler to construct than one of synonyms.

Some teachers will wish to supplement the group reading test by informal tests of the pupil's skills in basal reading materials. Dr. Nila B. Smith has recently made available a series of graded selections for primary levels for this type of testing.\* The selections permit the evaluation of literal comprehension, interpretation, phonic attack, and vocabulary. A similar informal reading inventory is available for the second to sixth grade levels in Emmett A. Bett's *Handbook on Corrective Reading*.† This latter series includes measures of level in basal materials, word recognition, and hearing comprehension.

A few teachers will wish to explore study skills, particularly with older pupils. They may wish to evaluate the pupil's abilities in locating information, as in library skills, use of the dictionary, map reading, and the reading of tables, charts and diagrams. Or evaluation of skill in organizing information may seem desirable, as in outlining, summarizing and note-taking. Still other study

\**Graded Selection for Informal Reading Diagnosis*. New York: New York University Press, 1959.

†Chicago: Wheeler, 1956.

skills of significance in retaining and using information that may be sampled are: memorizing, preparing reports, and the act of studying a chapter. With a little ingenuity, informal tests can be devised which provide a functional evaluation of these various study skills.

Strictly speaking, these informal tests of content field reading, study skills, and reading in basal materials are not clinical diagnosis. Such tests are more likely to be distributed through the course of the remedial program rather than being concentrated at the time of diagnosis. But these evaluations are an integral part of the diagnostic process of discovering how the pupil functions in all types of reading tasks. Moreover, because of their informality and obvious relationship to the pupil's work, they are much more realistic and meaningful to the pupil. Since they parallel the daily reading tasks

the pupil is attempting, the results lend themselves to pointed teacher-pupil discussion, and thus to more complete understanding of the pupil's reading and study practices.

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### Ammunition

Having trouble getting money for science books and magazines? Point out to your budget administrator that National Science Talent Search winners have usually developed their interests in the elementary school years.

Parents of forty student winners in 1960 list reading as one of the

methods which aided in science excellence. Type of reading included almanacs, children's series and general books of science, textbooks and semi-technical books on specific fields of science, encyclopedias (until ten years of age!), and magazines such as *Scientific American*, *Science News Letter*, and *Natural History*.

## The Materials and Diagnosis of Reading Problems

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IN AN individualized pattern of instruction reading problems are usually discovered during the individual teacher-pupil conference. They are corrected or dealt with on the spot, or postponed briefly for attention in a group of peers having the same difficulties. The teacher should identify the signals that indicate progress or danger and record them in some kind of a conference ledger. The one-to-one pupil-teacher situation is such that a running account can easily be kept. These notes are a gold mine for the next day's planning or a future evaluation.

There are many opportunities for grouping in an individualized program that, if skipped, are a sign of inefficient teaching, and the lost opportunities deprive children of needed skill development and group activity. The correction of problems and the promotion of growth can be done with children singly, in pairs, or in groups. The pendulum need not swing from our present condition of over-grouping to the opposite extreme of no grouping at all.

However, the nature and design of the one-to-one conference organizes reading activities on the exact rate or pace of the reading of each child, regardless of the progress of anyone else. While all patterns of reading instruction aim at prevention rather than correction, this

unique feature of individual conferences makes premature anticipation of progress difficult indeed. Diagnosing problems is easier when there is only one child with the teacher at a given time.

The materials used in such diagnosis are legion. There is no one set of books, no one workbook, no one manual, no one piece of literature that will do the whole job. It is, as it always has been, the *teacher*, the human, not the inanimate, factor which makes the difference. Most educational materials have some part that can be used by *some* teacher with *some* child for *some* reason. More than that, there is at any teacher's beck and call our whole language which can be spoken, written and read back, thus to become a piece of educational material to help some child improve his reading.

In addition, an informal reading inventory using sequential materials, such as a basal reader series so well described elsewhere, is useful. Achievement tests also have their place even though they need to be used sparingly, with care and judicious insight. The teacher's judgment is frequently more of a guide than many tests. I feel that evaluation of a child's reading on a test, standardized or not, is quite a different matter from that same child's

reading of material that *he* has chosen. We need research and experimentation to clarify such differences. On the whole, I would prefer spending test money on trade books, with the possible exception of an annual comprehensive achievement instrument.

Classroom materials, selected by children themselves, can be tailor-made for a particular problem as it arises. For the teacher believing in an individualized approach, however, correction is made only when the problem faced has been narrowed down to a single teachable item. This is then taught allowing the sense of achievement for the child (and the teacher) to be immediate, tangible, and satisfying. The approach that scatters the teaching-learning effort on several teachable items is less effective than an all-out attack on one immediate goal. I believe grouping should be organized to meet one specific need, one specific interest, or to accomplish one special goal.

This article is to deal with the materials that are used to diagnose problems. It would seem important, therefore, to list all possible materials, and then to delineate the developmental steps of the reading process. Problems arise when children falter on certain steps. The relationship among materials, diagnosis, and development is the emphasis I wish to make.

### **Classroom Materials for Reading Instruction**

The classroom materials that are

useful in an individualized program are limited only by the ability and interest of the class using them. But, specifically, what can be used? The following is a listing:

#### **A. Intangible Materials**

1. Children's thoughts, beliefs, ideas, values, emotions, etc.
2. Children's oral expressions of thoughts, beliefs, etc.
3. Children's reactions to the oral expression of others
4. Teachers' oral directions, labels, requests, rules, etc.
5. Teachers' invitations to talk, share, discuss, decide, etc.
6. All activities children engage in at school or home

#### **B. Tangible Materials**

1. Recordings of any or all of the intangible materials above by means of:
  - a. Written language
  - b. Mechanical devices, such as tapes
  - c. Spontaneous art work as that done
    - 1) by individuals, with or without color
    - 2) by groups on murals and the like
2. Thought-provoking objects, hobbies, artifacts, pets, etc.
3. Manufactured material
  - a. Films, film strips, slides, and similar resources suitable to a given situation
  - b. Printed materials
    - 1) Books, trade and text
    - 2) Supplementary materials, workbooks
    - 3) Children's weekly papers

- 4) Newspapers
- 5) Magazines
- 6) Reading Tests
4. Visitors with unusual interests or backgrounds, as sailors, cowboys, citizens of foreign lands, etc.

The reader might well ask, "What is not reading material?" Above, you see a comprehensive list, any one item of which should be useful to a teacher at some time or other in a reading instruction program.

An individualized program centers on children who use materials in a rough sort of progression from simple to complex. This cannot be mandated by other than the teacher. Sharp variation should not damage, indeed, should enhance, progress. Growth should permit reasonable fluctuation in the daily and weekly ups and downs of development.

The teacher, having spotted the trouble, proliferates activities at the instructional-independent reading level and does not continue at the frustration level. The onset of word-calling, finger-pointing, vocalization, and the like, occur with any person, at any age level, of any reading ability level. Surely, these actions are symptoms and not the basic cause of reading distress, and should so be treated.

Emotional distress most certainly figures in any discussion of the analysis of reading problems. Bizarre behavior of any type is a clue to psychological distress. As teachers are able to recognize incipient stages of mumps and measles, so, too, must the teacher be able to identify potentially dangerous behavior. While

there is danger from the too enthusiastic practice of amateur psychiatry, yet teachers do need enlightenment about what constitutes bizarre behavior.

Severe frustration from reading disability is no different from other severe disturbance. It cannot be ignored. My concern here is that we examine ways of identifying frustration in reading. Bizarre behavior from other causes is related, certainly, but cannot be emphasized in this paper.

### Stages of Reading Development

If children would verbalize their thoughts on how they learn to read, a series of stages such as the following might be expressed. May it be remembered that the burden of this article is not concerned with correction of problems, but the diagnosis or analysis of problems as practiced in an individualized reading pattern.

#### Progression: Stage A

1. I think about things I have done.
2. I can talk about what happens to me.
3. What I think about can be talked about by myself, my friends, or anyone else.
4. I can talk about what other pupils want to talk about.

*Diagnosis and Materials.* As the materials at this level consist almost entirely of the "Intangibles" noted above, the major problem of a teacher is with the child who has nothing to say. The teacher needs to make note of those whose ability to communicate ideas is limited, and she needs to work with them.

Space prevents detailed discussion of behavior with books that is revealing of immaturity. The reader is referred to an excellent discussion in Monroe\* for more information on this subject. Suffice it to say that behavior with books, even with children of school age, can be significantly revealing of limited development. In the main, however, a teacher diagnoses problems at Stage A by noting the ability of pupils to talk, and the strength of the left-to-right habit.

A teacher moving towards an individualized reading program at the independent reading level *may* work no differently than a teacher working towards a basal program. However, the latter will usually use more published reading readiness materials than the former who, by contrast, depends more on living experience and her own ingenuity.

Advocates of the experience approach, which has been with us a long time, will recognize little difference between the individualized and experience programs. However, no matter what pattern of reading instruction is the objective, a teacher must wait upon the maturation of children—their ability to talk, to listen, to sit, and to do the other myriad things required of increasing age.

#### *Progression: Stage B*

1. My teacher can write some of the things I talk about.
2. My teacher writes things that other children talk about.

\*Marion Monroe, *Growing into Reading*. Chicago: Scott-Foresman, 1951.

3. My teacher uses letters to make the words she writes.
4. I can see words I like best because I know what they are.
5. These are the words that help me to know what we said.

*Diagnosis and Materials.* Materials of diagnosis at this stage are usually (1) trade books which help ascertain a pupil's ability to enjoy books and the incidence of immature book behavior referred to in the preceding stage, and (2) pupil dictated materials which reveal best:

1. Inability to realize that the teacher's writing has:
  - a. personal meanings,
  - b. others' personal meanings.
2. Inability to find one's own words.
3. Strength of left-to-right habit.

#### *Progression: Stage C*

1. I can read when I can remember what we were talking about when the words were written down.
2. I can read when my words are the same as some other children's words.
3. I can read my words when they are in other children's stories.
4. I know *some* words no matter where I see them—even in books.
5. I can write any word that I can see.
6. I can read a lot of words that I can write if I know what they are when I write them.

*Diagnosis and Materials.* We see here the beginning of the ability to recognize words by their shape. Experiential materials are still the dominant means by which teachers determine whether the child can:

1. Recognize that reading is saying known words that bring meaning.

2. Identify own words within a reasonable length of time,
3. Identify own words in the stories of others,
4. Read back own material,
5. Copy own material and read it back with reasonable facility and comprehension.

In addition, as with any oral reading at any age or any ability level, word-calling must be prevented by an insistent referral to meaning and sense. In the experience approach being described, good oral reading is facilitated by the material read. There should be smooth, understanding reading aloud from the very beginning. Finger pointing might be apparent if the material has been typed for individual use, but it is impossible when reading is from material on the chalk board or easel.

Trade or text books with easy vocabulary, used on a self-choice basis, may reveal the level of interaction between child and the printed page. Sight words may be found independently in these books as well as in old experiential material. In fact, if sufficiently simple and attractive material is obtainable, independent reading will occur, often unexpectedly.

With the start of independent reading the teacher must see that each child:

- 1) Knows the content of the story,
- 2) Can bring value judgment to bear upon the story (for example: Do you like the Big Billy Goat Gruff because he was strong? — because he helps others?),

- 3) Internalizes or identifies personally with some incident or character in the story.\*

Inability to incorporate independent reading material into a child's value system of thinking and behavior must be regarded as reading disability, no matter how well he recognizes words.

#### *Progression: Stage D*

1. I can see that some words begin like other words.
2. I know which end of a word is the beginning.
3. I can see letters that words start with. Usually they are consonants.

*Diagnosis and Materials.* We see here the beginning of a reading vocabulary by means of initial consonants. Experience stories, etc., are still highly important. Problems of word recognition, hence poor comprehension (i.e., word calling, reversals, etc.), are easily identified for attention. However, books of all kinds containing words that have appeared in pupil-dictated material show problems of transfer of sight word recognition.

Teachers aiming for individuated approaches do not use sequential materials in their planned order at this or any other stage. Teachers pick and choose what they need when it is needed regardless of where it was intended to be used. Above all, easy, fluent oral and silent reading, even of the simplest material, must be apparent or the child must be considered to have a reading problem.

\*I am indebted to Dr. Lyman C. Hunt for sharpening my concepts in this area.

*Progression: Stage E*

1. I am reading stories I know.
2. I can figure out words I don't don't know by:
  - a. Beginning letter or letters,
  - b. The rest of the word when it belongs to a family of words,
  - c. Middle letters in words, which are usually vowels,
  - d. Small words in bigger words,
  - e. Parts of words or syllables,
  - f. Common beginnings and endings.\*

*Diagnosis and Materials.* This stage encompasses, as is obvious, the development of ability to apply sounding or analytic techniques to gain meaning from words. The ability to read independently has passed the point where it can be done solely by sight vocabulary.

Now that independent reading is possible at more difficult levels, the book supply is more abundant. Experiential material is still developed in some form (say a diary or newspaper), but books of all kinds are coming into their own. How, then, does a teacher using an individual approach develop word attack skills? To save space let us assume that when each child comes to his individual conference: (1) the child has selected material within his ability, (2) he has read it silently in conscientious preparation for his conference, and (3) the rest of the class is working independently in similar tasks.

After discussing the three points

\*I am indebted to Dr. E. W. Dolch for increasing my understanding in *Steps in Sounding*. Champaign, Illinois: Garrard Press.

important for the start of independent reading (see Stage C, above), the teacher hears the child read. Diagnostic skill is needed to identify problems at each level of Stage E, 2. For example: failure of the sense of left-to-right direction will effectively block the progression from sight word recognition to that aided by beginning consonants and blends. Failure to see such differences between "still" and "stand," or "can" and "car," etc., indicates development has paused on the level of beginning consonants (as well as lack of comprehension). Similarly, confusion between such words as "wall-will-walk," or "sink-sing-sang" reveals inability to see endings or families of words, or vowel differences (as well as lack of comprehension). The substitution of "wagon" for "cart" reveals either unusually wide eye-sweeps or a word recognition problem. Whatever may be the problem, phonics are subordinate to meaning, even though the existence of phonic skill is mandatory to advanced reading ability.

*Progression: Stage F*

1. In every way I am reading faster and reading more.
2. I am finding more ideas than ever.
3. I am learning more about myself from my reading.
4. I like to read more than ever.

*Diagnosis and Materials.* This stage, as can be seen, includes the increasing ability to enjoy and benefit from reading. The teacher who observes a stopping or slowing of book consumption has a problem. Or the observation of sudden in-

ability to talk over or present ideas gained from books is a danger signal. At any level, open dislike or boredom, as evidenced by groans or lethargy, is a clear signal of reading disability. There is no other diagnostic explanation.

### Summation

A paper presented at the 1960 meeting of the American Psychoanalytic Association raises the question of over-concern with materials:

Poets and bibliophiles may even have grasped the intricacies of reading better than educators and psychologists when they contended that reading was a process as creative as writing, and *might be hindered* by too much emphasis *on concentrated attention and too close scrutiny* of the materials. . . .\* (italics mine)

This is a succinct statement of the need for self-selection and self-pacing of reading. A fundamental difference between individualized reading and a basal system is the requirement of repetition in the lat-

ter of the same material by the same children. Not so in an individual approach. Even in this paper children may have to repeat a stage, but not the material used at that stage.

Diagnostic techniques used clinically (excepting machine devices) on an individual basis do not differ substantially from my preceding discussion. But classroom grouping practices based upon ability do *not* allow the necessary individual diagnostic attention.

The reader is urged to note that the major symptoms or signals of reading distress may occur *at any stage of development*. No level of development has exclusive claim to certain difficulties. Each problem can arise at any time, at any age, in any grade. The teacher who sees a total pattern of development, takes the learner *back* to that stage where the reading ability broke down, and proceeds through the progression again until growth resumes.

Learning to read by self-selection and individual conferences is an inherently preventive process. It seems to me that this is the way teaching should be.

\*Dr. Alfredo Mannum, Dr. Ernest Prelinger, Yale University. Reported, p. 31, *New York Times* of May 9, 1960.

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## Analysis of Reading Services in Intermediate Grades

by DONALD D. DURRELL  
● BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
AND  
WALTER J. McHUGH  
ALAMEDA COUNTY STATE COLLEGE

THE SUCCESS of a reading program depends more upon the quality of instruction provided than upon detailed analysis of pupil needs and difficulties. Pupil needs are relatively easy to discover; they are apparent in every reading performance of the pupil. The study of what the teacher does in relation to the differing needs of pupils is of prime importance and is the major emphasis in this article.

Some reading service needs of pupils are so universal in intermediate grade classrooms that there is no need to begin with a testing program. In every classroom pupils differ in reading level, in rates of learning, in types of difficulties, in initiative in using reading, and in needs for enrichment and motivation. These five major areas of service needs of pupils provide a basis for the study of instructional programs in reading. How well the teacher meets these needs may be discovered through an interview with the teacher conducted in her classroom.

The analysis of the classroom practices of the teacher is often considered too "delicate" for the supervisor to attempt. Teachers have grown hostile to rating scales, with

good reason, since such scales often rate personal characteristics, attitudes, inter-personal relations, classroom control, and other factors that are vague, subjective, and difficult of improvement. A quite different reception is given an interview which is clearly a cooperative search for common teaching problems and for ways to serve pupils better. The search is a joint venture of supervisor and teacher who share a concern for providing the best services for superior readers, poor readers, inattentive or poorly motivated pupils.

The interview may begin with the statement, "Providing for the wide range of individual differences in reading among pupils is complex and difficult. Nobody knows for sure how it should be done. The reason for this interview is to find out what you have found useful in serving the different needs of pupils in reading. If you have more problems than solutions, don't worry about it; we may be able to find ways of solving them."

The first concern in the interview is with *provisions for different levels of reading ability*. "What ways have you found to care for very good readers?" A superior program may include early dispatch of the basal

reader, if it is used at all; team or individualized reading programs, with sensible guidance for balance; long-term specialties in literature; curriculum-related specialties in social studies and science, assigned in advance of classroom need; provision for individual or team work in improving expression in oral reading, overcoming difficulties in study abilities, recall, use of references, design of reports. The superior readers share with all class members in choral reading, play reading, listening to recordings, watching motion pictures or television programs related to literature.

Meeting the reading levels of very poor readers is considered next. Adjustments characteristic of superior teachers include the use of basal readers or supplementary readers of a lower level, the suitability being indicated by the vocabulary load; provision for word analysis abilities on a proper level; glossaries and study guides to aid attentive silent reading; oral presentation of materials in social studies and science if materials of a suitable level are not available. These pupils will share in class activities in choral reading, in play reading, and other literature appreciation activities. Self-directing materials are used for team practice in word skills, in oral reading, in comprehension in silent reading. An inquiry about average readers is made last. The superior program for them will contain features from the services given to good readers and poor readers, depending upon the reading levels and needs of the group.

An inquiry about *provision for differences in learning rates* is always made, but replies usually are much the same as those made in regard to reading level. However some teachers utilize skills practice materials which allow children to progress as rapidly as they can master the tasks. The SRA Reading Laboratory makes provision for progress rates, as do some skills workbooks and phonics practice materials. Learning rates are also provided for in independent reading. The pace of progress through basal readers is varied with the abilities of different groups of pupils. The pupil specialties programs in literature and content subjects allow faster learners to obtain greater breadth and depth of knowledge.

Replies to questions about *provision for differences in the skills needs* among pupils discover those teachers who have specific plans for overcoming weaknesses in reading abilities. Superior teachers have made analyses of difficulties of individuals and groups of children and are providing intensive teaching programs to meet them. There are direct sequential programs for applied phonics, for improving meaning vocabulary, for improving comprehension and recall, for improving phrasing and expression in oral reading, for practice in skimming, use of references, and other abilities which appear important. Improvement of such skills is not left to chance. Often the practice is intensified by children working in pairs or teams of three, with self-directing and self-correcting mate-

rials. Teacher-led practice utilizes every-pupil response techniques, rather than waiting for "turns."

*Provision for initiative and self-direction* is always found in superior reading programs. In skills practice, it is evidenced by the use of teams working in self-directing materials, with pupils taking the initiative in improving their skills. Oral reading groups of three to five, working by themselves, are common. Team approaches are used in preparing for play reading or in marking poems for choral reading. Individual research related to specialties, team preparation of reports or displays, and groups working on programs for special events indicate teacher concern for self-direction and initiative. The products of reading ventures are preserved in many ways. In a shelf of "Our Publications for the Year" there may be included illustrated reports used in the pupil specialties program, volumes of poetry, plays, or stories written about topics studied; personal notebooks recording gleanings from independent reading; a class calendar or diary of important achievements and productions of the year.

*Enrichment of the reading program* is the final area of inquiry. "How do you make reading important and colorful to the children in your classes?" Answers to previous questions will often show superior enrichment services: reading specialties, both long-term and shorter curriculum-related ones; extensive use of choral reading, play reading, and impromptu dramatization; dis-

cussions involving elaborative and critical thinking; reading projects related to field trips and classroom displays; story hours, motion pictures, television programs, and recordings related to reading interests. There will be evidence of planning and balancing the reading program, of stimulating a great variety of special interests in reading.

In the interview, if general questions about provision for levels of reading ability and other phases of the reading service fail to elicit a clear picture of the services being given, specific questions are asked about needs, adjustments, and activities. Since the interview is conducted in the teacher's classroom, when pupils are not present, actual plans, materials, and records may clarify teachers' statements.

We have used a four-point scale in rating each of the five phases of the reading program. Uniform instruction with little evidence of planning differentiated instruction is rated *one*; incidental, minor, or occasional service is rated *two*; planned service in some, but not all aspects of the desired service, is rated *three*; major provision for pupil needs, with few areas for improvement, is rated *four*. If the maximum score is given in all five areas of service, the total rating is *twenty*.

The average rating of the reading services of a group of thirty-five teachers in intermediate grades in one community was 6.9, slightly above the minimum possible rating of 5.0, which indicates uniform textbook instruction. A year later, after

a cooperative program to provide for learning needs, the average rating was 14.6, showing a marked increase in the quality of reading services, but with many possible areas of improvement.\*

The primary value of this analysis of service needs is that it provides a basis for improvement of instruction; its use as a rating scale is incidental and may be omitted. Such an inquiry will reveal common problems among groups of teachers and will provide a basis for cooperative planning. If superior readers are neglected, if materials of instruction are unsuited to pupil needs, if certain reading abilities require intensive effort, if the program is weak in variety of activities which stimulate initiative and self-direction, an intensive effort may be made to improve the program. Materials and techniques which meet the needs of pupils in one classroom may spread to other classrooms. The analysis directs attention to future improvement, rather than to teacher failure.

The analysis of services to pupil reading needs immediately approaches the central task of improving reading instruction. When the initial approach is giving a series of diagnostic tests, using rating scales and observation forms, the real work

is still to be done. Sheets of pupil scores on such tests must be translated into plans, lessons, techniques, programs. Instead of diagnostic testing programs, many teachers depend upon observing the difficulties of pupils in daily work. Every day's lesson is a diagnostic test, revealing difficulties in abilities essential to growth in reading. The key to effective reading instruction is the observation of the suitability of the classroom program for pupil needs, and the ready replacement of materials and plans which are ineffective.

This type of analysis of reading services does not standardize reading programs. There are many ways that the varying needs of pupils may be met. Almost every proposal for reading programs, almost every type of instructional material, may be useful for some pupils at some stage of reading development. Basal reading textbooks, individualized reading programs, "packages" of instructional materials, workbooks, mechanical devices, and other aids to teaching may be utilized. None, however, appears to be suitable for all pupils or provides all the services required for a rich and effective reading program. The teacher is free to plan many approaches to serving reading needs, to vary the content and emphasis of the reading program. There must be, however, some basis for evaluating the different programs in relation to recognized needs of pupils.

\*Durrell, Donald D., and others. "Adapting Instruction to the Learning Needs of Children in Intermediate Grades." *Journal of Education*, 142 (Dec., 1959), 1-78.

# Diagnosis of College Reading Problems by Use of Textbooks

by PHILLIP B. SHAW  
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COLLEGE READING involves at least two major components — the student and his task. We can think of no greater boon to the field of developmental reading than a thorough-going effort by college teachers to understand the *normal* reading difficulties of their *typical* students, using the materials of their own courses.

As a new field, developmental reading on the higher level is on the defensive. Efforts to indoctrinate educators to believe that every college freshman can improve his reading proficiency have been frustrated by the misunderstanding that this developmental educating is the same as "remedial" help. Programs of both types are vital. But, the titanic need for new money that American colleges and universities will face—estimates range from twenty-one to forty *billions* of dollars by 1970—will lead to belt tightening that can shrink college developmental reading programs if they are not fully understood and ably defended (1).

It is essential that the study of the student and his skills, the analysis of what college reading demands, and provision for a developmental sequence of activities for the improvement of reading abilities should all go forward. College is a "bookish" world; the textbook is a major strat-

egy of teaching, and it can become an instrument for analyzing and serving student needs.

## Why Is Textbook Reading a Problem?

The textbook may appeal to the teacher as an aid, but it is often first identified by the student as an obstacle. What are the special problems that students attribute to a particular course and its textbook? The reading teacher may discover several.

At the outset, the student reacts quite logically and correctly to the rise in reading difficulty of the college text as contrasted with the high school text. In the second place, he reacts to a real difference between high school and college teaching. Not only is he faced with a more difficult reading task, but he is expected to deal with it more independently. A syllabus takes the place of a daily assignment. Or a term paper rather than brief answers to a series of questions may be the goal. Lecture and reading often pursue related but rarely converging lines. Let us examine these problems in more detail.

*A perplexing textbook.* Students may object to a certain textbook as being confusing to read. Such a text may not be suited to the particular group of students expected to read

it, or may be suited to only a segment of that group. It may be poorly edited, with lamentably few guides such as glosses, bold type, questions, charts and diagrams. More subtle (but just as vexing) is poor style: a weak paragraph may bulge with many generalizations or languish with none, being only a conglomeration of facts. Finally, a text can be baffling to read if the author rambles on from one main point to another without integrating these points.

Actual reading level may pose a problem. A great research project is in the offing for the college which undertakes to find out what it asks in the way of reading. We have in this decade excellent information about the difficulty of elementary school texts, fair information about high school texts, but almost no data on college reading materials. Some of the tools for this research are available. We can calculate the kinds of difficulty which depend chiefly on vocabulary level and complexity of style. We lack, however, measures of difficulty based on what might be called "fact-saturation," relation of explanatory material to exposition, the use of tables, graphs and other technical aids, and so on.

*A confusing syllabus.* A poor syllabus can induce frustrations which carry over to the readings that it refers to. A syllabus that does not observe standard outline practices is especially perplexing. Topics may be presented as being of parallel importance but be actually a scrambling of main and subordinate points. A syllabus which is a mere list of

topics and of pages to be read fails to have the outline feature of showing relationships. A syllabus without even a statement of course objectives, or, on the other hand, one crammed with lengthy exposition, is also objectionable. Any one of these "aids" to reading can, if it is used by a whole department, cause epidemics of reading failures in an entire freshman class.

*Absence of directed reading.* Students may complain of not knowing what to look for in a particular text. The "read pages so-and-so for next time" type of teacher may actually cause some fledgling freshmen to develop reading problems. Students unmotivated or otherwise inadequately prepared to derive maximum comprehension from a particular assignment will require lower-level instruction than those better prepared. In the classroom where this occurs often, the instructor's teaching, too, will be down-graded, until low standards of "lesson-getting" reduce him to an expositor and a quizzier. Many a reading ill may accrue from such misuse of the assignment.

We are almost totally in the dark about the use of texts and the relation of the teaching of a course to the apparent difficulty of the text. To go even further into forbidden territory, actually we know very little about many teaching techniques in college, where the classroom is a citadel. Experiment and research are badly needed.

*Lack of integration between class and text.* When a student is aware

that a particular reading assignment will *not* be discussed during following hours, but suspects that it may be the basis of a test question in the future, he can hardly be blamed for not doing the reading on time. The full assignment experience consists of three stages: the sense of expectation and purpose before the assignment is begun, the sense of acquisition as it is read and studied, and, finally the sense of fulfillment when the knowledge that was acquired alone is evaluated with others. The instructor who denies his students this final stage not only induces reading frustrations but also encourages dilatory work and fitful cramming that become evident as "reading problems."

### Diagnosing Basic Problems

Do college teachers question the need for basic reading instruction? If so, they should remind themselves of the widespread concern today about the prevalence of inadequate school performance on American college campuses. For example, President Case of Bard College has stated: "I suggest that the majority of liberal arts students deliver something like 40 to 60 per cent of their potential power to the driving wheels." Most incoming freshmen do not have the philosophy or the tools for utilizing the new freedom and responsibility in college so as to gain maximum personal development out of the experience.

No one should feel astonished or alarmed to find that the student needs help in these undertakings,

especially those where reading is the tool. Reading instruction in the elementary and secondary schools is not under attack. The student must learn to satisfy difficult and complex purposes *when* he faces mature demands. It is true that good habits of application, understanding and analysis should be there to build on, but college teachers themselves would be the first to agree that their courses *should* have new challenges for the student. Sound courses ought to demand new reading and thinking skills.

It is for the above reasons that a college teacher of reading should diagnose not only the problems of which the students are aware, but also their particular "readiness" to gain maximum achievement according to their particular scholastic potentialities. In brief, the reading teacher should learn what he can about each student's proficiency in the basic skills of college reading.

According to the Gray-Rogers classification, there are five basic attributes of the "mature" reader. The mature reader develops an interest in reading, establishes purposes for reading, recognizes and constructs meaning in reading, reacts to ideas, and gives attention to the kinds of material read (2). Much discussion of the attitudes and skills that comprise these attributes among college students and adults has already been recorded (3). When these attributes are kept in mind when using regular textbooks for diagnosing reading problems, the steps below are suggested.

*Interest.* Students often regard textbooks as necessary evils; they are hair shirts that the discipline of becoming educated requires. Accordingly, the college reading teacher should find out whether the student's attack upon a textbook, especially upon one new to him, promotes interest. Does he attempt a bird's-eye view of the nature, scope, and organization of the material? Does he relate the observations he makes of the table of contents with his previous experience in the field of study? Does he create within himself an attitude of anticipation concerning which topics are likely to be discussed in the various chapters? Does he use intelligently the preface, the introduction, the opening paragraphs of the book? Has he savored the text by browsing?

*Purposes.* The student's interest in a textbook is directly proportional to the clarity of the purposes for which he reads. The naive purpose with which the untrained student attacks much reading—to get through it once as fast as possible—must be replaced with the far more sophisticated purposes demanded by a "hard" text and by more exacting study goals. Ramifications of the following question need to be explored: "Does the student read his assignments with the related classroom experience in the *front* of his mind?"

*Reading competency.* Like interest and purposes during reading, the student's very proficiency is a motivating factor. One generally gets satisfaction from performing tasks

that he does well. The diagnosis of competency can actually be phrased in terms of liking or disliking to use the various skills: "Do you like to skim-read the headings of a chapter before and after you have read? Do you like to continue gearing your reading speed to the particular demands of the page, or do you prefer to read at a fixed pace? Are you pleased that textbooks are divided into paragraphs or sections, or do you wish they had considerably less or no divisions?"

Clues to other competencies, especially the problems that students associate with an absence of either directed or discussed reading, can be found in the students' notebooks. A reading teacher can diagnose these types of problems by examining the notes taken by a group of his students on the same textbook assignment. Next, he can read the class notes taken by these students during the lecture or discussion related to the textbook assignment. By using these classroom materials, the reading teacher can ferret out firsthand evidence of many allied reading problems.

*Reacting.* That the avenue of communication between the reader and the author ought to be a two-way street is a point of view some students stubbornly resist. It is so much easier to travel without having to think about opposing traffic! This phase of the diagnosis should, therefore, be functional. For example: "Read any fair-sized paragraph in your social science text, asking yourself these questions: 'Which ideas

here remind me of something I have done, seen, heard, or read about? Is any idea here not convincing? Do I disagree in any way with an idea here?" When you have read the paragraph and reacted to these questions, ask yourself: "Has this critical manner of reading helped me to understand and remember the paragraph?" "

*Recognizing kinds of reading matter.* "Do you think that you could identify sample excerpts from science, social science, and English textbooks? Could you distinguish between (a) an excerpt with social science implications, but from an English textbook, and (b) an excerpt with literary implications, but from a social science text?" Or, "Does the word 'read' at once suggest to you a textbook, or does it also make you think of magazines, newspapers, novels, and so on? Does the word 'read' also suggest different levels of interests and purpose with which you read, for instance, a science textbook and a popular article on science?"

The reading diagnosis suggested above can be made a lively, interesting experience for the student. In these ways the world of books is represented to him as a real world.

### **A Forward Look**

The diagnosis of college reading skills should eventually be facilitated by high-level tests of the characteristic reading operations demanded by different courses. But it is obvious that college programs cannot and should not wait for the completion

of the needed research. In the meantime, the reading specialist can take "regular" textbooks and reference works into his program for informal diagnoses. The performance of the student with his actual, current reading assignments should be studied.

Certain college reading improvement programs already are utilizing regular textbooks extensively (4). Others integrate reading instruction with a regular course, be it engineering, history, or social studies, so that course textbooks are the very core of the reading program (5).

At this point it should be stated that a reading teacher's tact, diplomacy, and convictions (as well as his own reading abilities) may be severely tested when he uses such regular texts in his reading program. Ideally, a reading teacher should analyze textbooks both for and with other college instructors.

There are limitations, of course, to using only regular textbooks for diagnosing reading problems. Here, college reading manuals especially prepared to serve as substitutes for regular textbooks in reading programs can be very useful. These manuals which sample textbook materials should provide for accurate study of a student's performance as he reads for specified purposes in the major subject areas, under normal college study conditions, and for genuine reasons. These materials should also control the manifold factors which contribute to difficulty under different circumstances, and should be graded in general difficulty. They should range in length, in

style, in character, just as do the texts which they represent. They should be read by the student for a variety of clearly stated purposes. They should become the basis of outlines, of logical notes, and of reading for thorough retention, as well as reading for general tone. In short, at their best, they should be genuinely representative of college reading (6).

### Notes

1. For an analysis of the field of reading improvement on all educational levels, see the forthcoming 60th Yearbook (1961) of the National Society for the Study of Education.

2. William S. Gray and Bernice Rogers, *Maturity in Reading: Its Nature and Appraisal*, University of Chicago Press, 1956.

3. In *New Frontiers in Reading*, International Reading Association Conference

Proceedings, Vol. 5 (1960), edited by J. Allen Figurel.

4. College Reading programs using regular textbooks are described by Irma T. Halfter and Frances M. Douglass in "Inadequate College Readers," *Journal of Developmental Reading*, I (Autumn, 1958), pp. 42-53; and by Homer Carter in "Effective Use of Textbooks in the Reading Program," *8th Yearbook* (1959), National Reading Conference, pp. 155-163.

5. College reading programs integrated with regular courses are described by Haym Kruglak, "Instruction in Textbook Reading and Achievement in Elementary Engineering Physics," *Science Education* 39 (1955), pp. 155-160; by Sister M. Fridian and Sister M. Rosanna, "A Developmental Reading Experiment in a European History Class," *Journal of Developmental Reading*, I (Autumn, 1958), pp. 3-7; and by R. A. Warlick, Jr., "The Comprehension Factor in College Social Studies," *Journal of Developmental Reading*, II (Spring, 1959), pp. 37-43.

6. The present authors have sought to incorporate these characteristics in: Phillip B. Shaw and Agatha Townsend, *College Reading Manual: For Class and Individual Training*, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1959.

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# What's Happening in Reading in Australia

by R. G. COCHRANE

● UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

AUSTRALIA, with only 50,000 square miles less than the U. S. A. (excluding Alaska), has a population of a little over ten million! It has 3.6 people to the square mile: America has about sixteen times as many. Fifty-three and one half per cent of the Australian population is in the capital cities, with about 1.6 people to the square mile outside them. These facts, emphasizing great distances and sparse population, suggest reasons for Australia's highly centralized educational systems with consequent uniformity of administration, education content and method.

## Education Systems

In Australia there are only six education authorities, the State Departments of Education of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, and Tasmania. These departments employ the teachers and lay down the curricula. The commonwealth is responsible only for some education of its own personnel, education in the territories, and the education of some immigrants and some natives. Compare Australia's six authorities with the U. S. A.'s 59,270 in 1955 (1). Despite much uniformity, there are some differences from state to state. Victoria's system covers a small area with a population of 32 to the square mile; Western Australia's

system covers 976,000 square miles with a population density of .74 to the square mile. There are administrative differences. Victorian children pass on to secondary schooling earlier than New South Wales children. Queensland children change last of all. There are differences in compulsory attendance requirements, differences in teacher training, and so on. But generally, Australian education is standardized.

In addition to the state schools, there are many private schools that must provide efficient education but who are independent of state control. In Queensland in 1959, 20 per cent of primary children were in non-government schools and 38 per cent of secondary.

## Reading Standards

There is little difference from state to state. Thirteen years ago the Australian Council for Educational Research examined about 35,000 children aged ten years to twelve years eleven months in about six hundred selected schools throughout Australia. The reading section of the test battery showed no significant differences in *word recognition*. There were, however, significant differences in *speed of reading* and *reading for meaning*, the findings showing Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania to be relatively high in these aspects and Queensland rel-

atively low (2). At this time the Council thought that state performance was a compound of many factors, but observed that, "it is highly probable that there are traditions in the various states which affect the attitude of both teachers and children to the subjects" (3).

Ninety-four per cent of Queensland's arithmetic ratings were relatively high.

Since this survey there has been much activity in all states, particularly in the infant reading field. Curriculum committees of head and class teachers, inspectors, administrators, and educational psychologists have been responsible for radical changes in reading teaching and reading material. The thirteen-year-old findings may be no longer valid.

### Research

Departmental research sections have some effect on matters of method and content. Not enough of this is made public. In 1957 the Director of the Australian Council for Educational Research said, "Work done in the research offices and branches of State Departments of Education is exceedingly difficult to assess since so little is known of it outside the walls of the departments" (4). At the same time, however, he did commend the Queensland Research and Guidance Bulletins for their statement of the use of a research office in the guidance and evaluation of at least some departmental policies and programmes. Victorian departmental research has recently become more available. Departmental Teachers'

Colleges also have contributed in reading research fields.

The establishment of research departments within University Departments of Education has increased reading research activity, as has also the conferring of post-graduate degrees in education. Fred J. Schonell\* has been pre-eminent in university reading research activities. His interest in backwardness has inspired much work in the reading field, and his annual course in Diagnostic Testing and Remedial Teaching has attracted students from all Australian states, from New Zealand, and even from Texas and Ohio. His methods and reading material enjoy world-wide reputation and use.

No one Australian journal publishes reading research, but various pieces of work have been described in

*The Slow Learning Child*—University of Queensland, three times a year

*The Australian Journal of Education*—Australian Council for Educational Research, three times a year  
*Education News*—Commonwealth Office of Education, every two months

*The Forum of Education*—Sydney Teachers' College, three times a year

*The Educand*—University of Western Australia, annually, and Departmental Gazettes in the various states.

All the above information may

\*Schonell, Fred J., M.A., M.Ed., Ph.D., D.Lit., Professor of Education, University of Queensland.

help in an appreciation of the survey which follows.

In the following survey mention of an activity in one state does not mean that it is peculiar to that state. Full information concerning other states may just not be available.

### **Tertiary**

The assessment and improvement of reading skills at the university level has been a major activity in several states.

Using the Co-operative Reading Test, Higher Level, Form Y, Wheeler in Western Australia tested enough university freshman students for the production of local norms and for comparison with students of the U. S. A. (5). There was significant Western Australia superiority in the matter of vocabulary. In speed of comprehension, comprehension, and total reading score, West Australian students were significantly lower than U.S.A. pre-professional college students. In speed of comprehension they did not differ significantly from U.S.A. liberal arts college students, but scored significantly higher in comprehension and total reading score.

Anderson had similar findings in his study of 457 freshmen (6). Using another Higher Level Co-operative Test, he found that West Australian humanities students scored higher in vocabulary than U.S.A. pre-professional students but lower in speed of comprehension. The West Australian freshmen as a whole were below the pre-professional U.S.A. students in speed of comprehension but above

liberal arts students. Generally the West Australians had better vocabulary than U.S.A. students but lower speed of comprehension. West Australian students seemed to be more homogeneous in reading test scores than their American counterparts. West Australian level of comprehension and total reading score had improved over the years 1951-1957.

Anderson, who is president of the West Australian Council of the International Reading Association, is at present working on a reading test at tertiary level. During 1958-1959 he gave remedial reading instruction to about one hundred university students, and he has reported a 1958 experiment with forty-five students (7). He found greatest gains with students who, as a result of the course, had widened their reading, with lower gains among those reading only a course minimum. He thought that students in other faculties than the humanities might need more specific material.

Victoria's main university reading activity over the last three or four years has been the application of special training procedures to the improvement of the efficiency of the older reader. This activity followed lectures by Wing Commander Greenaway of the Royal Australian Air Force College at Point Cook. Very popular courses are now given by the R.A.A.F. College, about six large industrial firms, several government departments, the Y.M.C.A. and the Institute of Management. Apparatus used includes the reading rate controller, the tachistoscope,

reading training films, and comprehension tests.

The University of Melbourne will offer courses to students and staff following its pilot experiment on forty volunteer staff members. In this experiment reading rate with narrative material was increased by an average of about 80 per cent with a range of 0-200 per cent. If anything, comprehension was greater with the higher rate. Staff reaction varied concerning both general and specific application, there being more interest from the Science and science based faculties than from Arts, Law or Commerce. Matters for further investigation include meaning, measurement of comprehension, the role of motivation, and the specific contribution of each training device to reading improvement. The University Extension Committee has published Greenaway's lectures, "Efficient Reading—An Approach to Improved Techniques."

In New South Wales the Universities of Sydney and New South Wales collaborated to bring W/Cdr. Greenaway to Sydney, and a subsequent project is evaluating effects with students at the Kindergarten Training College. If results are encouraging there may be a programme for university students.

Western Australia reports combined university and adult education organization for the improvement of adult reading. Wheeler and Anderson have run two adult classes per term over two years without meeting the demand. Western Australian

Teachers' Colleges also are active in tertiary research. Both are experimenting with Harvard films. Miss May Marshall, Secretary of the West Australian Council of the International Reading Association, is handling some research at teachers' college level. Graylands Teachers' College has an experimental remedial reading programme for first-year students scoring below the 50th percentile on the college entrance test battery, and research is planned to determine what level of reading backwardness is most responsive to the programme. At "Claremont" comparison is being made of the Parker and the Iowa approaches with training college students.

### Secondary

In Australia there are signs that interest in secondary reading is increasing. In Victoria many schools are interested in, and some have purchased, the equipment used at the University of Melbourne for its tertiary researches. A Brisbane secondary boys' school is experimenting with a S.R.A. Reading Laboratory. The Western Australian Department claims to be the pioneer in experiment with this laboratory. In addition, in Western Australia, Dr. Neal, Superintendent of Research and Curriculum and President of the Institute of Educational Research, has set in train a number of researches concerning secondary reading.

In a study of Sydney adolescents Connell and others reported many interesting findings concerning secondary school age readings (8). They

found that 88 per cent of adolescents read one or more newspapers every day. They found interest in the Press developing at 13 years with steadily increasing interest for boys over the 13-19 year range, but with a girls' peak between 15 and 16 years and then a slow decline.

They found that the sale of comic books had been established firmly in Sydney since World War II, that these books were almost entirely off-prints of American publications, that in 1951 approximately fifty million copies were sold on the Australian market, and that 50 per cent of these were distributed in the state of New South Wales. Romantic comics have had a slight decline since 1951.

Connell and his collaborators found at all levels that girls read more than boys, and that for both sexes, thirteen-year-olds read more than fourteen-year-olds, the fifteen-year-old swinging upward toward the thirteen-year level but not reaching it.

On the type of secondary school reading they have this to say (9):

The more extensive reading of the old, as against the new, good fiction, indicates a considerable degree of school influence upon the reading indulged in by pupils. Not only are school libraries likely to be more fully stocked with Scott, Dickens and George Eliot than they are with A. J. Cronin and Nevil Shute, but the school staff is more likely to encourage reading of the former novelists. In the same place they make a further interesting statement concerning readiness for the classics,

The boy's voluntary reading demon-

strates quite clearly that he has not passed beyond the stage of pure adventure by the time he turns fifteen, and therefore is not ready for the classics until after this period.

### Primary

Some state systems have departmental readers supplemented by school newspapers or magazines and suitable library material. Money for library material is, in the writer's own state, raised by Parents' and Citizens' Committees, such amounts being subsidized by the Education Department on a pound for pound basis. Library equipment in a Queensland state primary school thus largely depends on the enthusiasm and activity of the Committee. Some schools have a reasonably large central library. Others favour the building up of a library for each classroom. Throughout Australia there is a need for better information to schools concerning suitability of books for various age levels.

Victorian schools have seen considerable school library development, mostly for classrooms. About one hundred and thirty schools, however, have set up central libraries under teacher-librarians, of whom about fifty have taken the one-year course for the Trained Teacher-Librarian's Certificate following normal teacher training. This course contains some treatment of remedial reading which teacher-librarians are expected to undertake in selected cases in their schools.

Victoria is producing its own Departmental Readers, all on the

principle of vocabulary control, books for Grades I to III having been completed. Many private schools have no fixed basic readers but Schonell and Flowerdew's "Wide Range" Readers (10) are widely used, either as basic readers or as supplementaries. These readers are also widely used in state schools—West Australia, South Australia, and the Territory of Papua, New Guinea reporting their use above Grade III.

Research activities into primary reading have included the Queensland Department's comparison of reading standards (11) for Grade V in 1933, 1946, and 1955 through examination of over one thousand pupils, no changes of any consequence being observed. The University of Queensland normed Schonell's achievement tests in reading, spelling, and arithmetic on a population of seven thousand children. Current Queensland activities include investigations of reading learning theory, of teaching method, and of effects of remedial teaching. A speed and comprehension reading test is being constructed for children aged seven to eleven years.

Richardson (12) in 1957 examined over a thousand children in Grades III to V to obtain matched groups of 97 severely retarded and 97 good readers. He examined 85 factors for significant differences between the groups. Among the factors significantly differentiating the groups were functional disorders, social relations, quality of family life, and other personal and social factors. Among the 97 severely retarded

readers he found 50 cases of insecurity in the home background.

One New South Wales school is at present experimenting with the tachistoscope and reading rate controller. University studies in New South Wales have included:

"The Teaching of Reading at Primary Level"

"Historical Analysis of Developments and Trends in Reading Instruction since 1788"

"Development of Concepts in Young Children, Especially in Reading"

The University of New England has reported a study of the influence of reading methods on borderline achievement.

In a 1957 "grouping" experiment, Ball (13) used 73 pairs of children from Grades IV to VI matched for age, I.Q., reading ability, grade and sex, and found no differences between experimentals and controls. He found that there may be better interaction between some teachers and homogeneous groups, and that the "grouped" may show quick initial improvement but a later fall off. He thought that better pupils should be purposefully challenged.

Ganderton (14) found differently in his Victorian primary school, where grouped Grade III pupils pursuing a modern reading method improved one and three quarters as much as a "conventional" group, their silent reading at the end of the year being equalled only by a grade two years higher.

In South Australia May (15) reported how teachers themselves will

experiment if a need is felt. He established that, even in a school with good staff, high socio-cultural environment, and interested parents, 27 per cent of Grade VI and 33 per cent of Grade V were retarded over a year in at least one of the reading tests. Teachers suggested their own solutions. One teacher reserved ten minutes of the reading period for the reading of arithmetic. Several taught for increase of eye span. One Grade III teacher had her children start every lesson with a retention exercise—of five seconds' silent reading. At the end of the year all the class could retain three lines, some four. Group methods were extensively used, this principle extending to other subjects when its virtues for reading were observed. Monitors were used and all children had the purposes of new arrangements explained to them. The average increase over the year in reading for meaning was 18 months. Parents now seek to cooperate more in attacking a specific weakness and formerly uninterested pupils now like reading. The staff thought that remedial reading groups in Grades III and IV would eliminate problems in the upper grades. The outstanding aspect of this experiment was that teachers worked out their own problems with the help of a sympathetic head teacher and guidance officer. They were not *required* to do anything. May (16) submitted "that this counselling approach where teachers are not told what to do, but where they are given an opportunity to find their own way, is

productive of results that no authoritative advice or direction is capable of achieving."

Tasmania has been interested in word lists and English syntax, the Primary School Standing Committee publishing "A Minimum Vocabulary for Primary Schools" (17). Western Australia is modifying the Primary School Edition of the S.R.A. Reading Laboratory and is finding its use worth while. Their state department is working on a reading test.

Australia caters to many Asian students interested in reading in their own countries. Many carry out research projects. For example, a Thai student of the University of Queensland is constructing a word recognition test for Thai primary schools. In 1956 at the University of Melbourne, Ali (18) constructed a comprehension test in Arabic, this being standardized in Jordan over the 8 to 13 year range, and is now being extended to other Arabic countries.

### Infant

Generally, infant schooling covers the first two grades. Unlike some other States, Queensland has no preparatory year before "Grades" start.

Australia has had little extremism of the phonic or "look and say" schools, and composite methods have been substantially used for a long time. Some infant readers have, however, been phonically biased. Until 1959 Queensland Infant Readers had a pronounced phonic bias. South Australian Infant Readers still have, although many schools there use the "Happy Venture" or "Janet

and John" readers instead. Western Australia a few years ago swung too far from phonics and now uses a "compromise" method. Tasmanian, New South Wales, and Victorian departments have published their own infant readers. Schonell's "Happy Venture" Readers (19) are prescribed for Queensland, very extensively used in Western Australia, and used as supplementaries in other states. All states seem to subscribe to the necessity for a sight vocabulary before phonics are taken. Changes in infant method and material have come slowly. Australian education is conservative, Queensland's particularly so, and there were very good grounds before a departure from initial phonic emphasis and old phonic style infant readers was made. Queensland experimented for four years before finally deciding on the adoption of Schonell's scheme for infant readers. A very interesting observation of objective testers in the preliminary two-year experiment was that fewer than one-fifth of the children in the most "phonic" school of all appeared to use phonics in an attack on unknown words (20). For the second experiment over 1956-57 a Committee in Charge and 27 schools throughout Queensland were involved and found the "modern" method of teaching reading far superior to the old (21).

Grouping in infant classes, however, seems still to be feared due to the old idea that it is necessary to check the individual progress of every pupil all the time, and that all pupils must be supervised for the

same period. The fact that other states report grouping *experiments* suggests that lock-step class instruction is still common.

All states appear to be seized with the importance of preventing reading retardation through suitable attention in Grade I.

Private schools, of course, are free to choose their own readers and their own methods. One reporting grammar school used one series of readers for phonic teaching, Schonell's readers, and the Victorian departmental readers.

Several years ago the Australian Council for Educational Research sponsored the development of reading readiness tests and programmes. The Queensland Department has now published a readiness book for use in early Grade I.

### Remedial

Remedial reading at tertiary and secondary levels has been mentioned before in this article. Probably the leading Australian remedial reading unit is the Child Development and Remedial Education Centre under the direction of Fred. J. Schonell within the Department of Education in the University of Queensland. Established in 1951, this Centre has had a major part through "clinical" activities, undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, and reading research, in the establishment of remedial reading activity in Australia. Departmental and private teachers from all states have attended its second term course in Diagnostic Testing and Remedial Teaching.

Overseas students have also attended the course. The Centre's activities, including researches, are described in its recently published report (22). Except for one Queensland departmental teacher carrying out experimental work, the Centre is the only Queensland remedial teaching agency. New South Wales has some itinerant remedial teachers. Victoria has eleven departmental remedial centres. Even where there are no specific remedial facilities, most state departments offer special remedial suggestions to teachers. Following participation in Queensland's course, some private teachers have set up remedial units in their own schools.

The Queensland course consists of:

1. Remedial Teaching Techniques
2. Psychology of Backwardness in the Basic Subjects
3. Intelligence, Attainment, and Diagnostic Testing
4. Curriculum Planning for Opportunity Classes
5. Creative Activities for Backward Children
6. Social Background of Retardation
7. Principles of Child Psychology and Mental Hygiene
8. The Education of the Spastic Child

The Centre continues with remedial teaching of children for experimental purposes, but aims mainly to make this possible with up-to-date methods in other educational establishments.

### General

This already long survey of the Australian scene would double in

size if the general community picture were to be discussed. No general community treatment, therefore, is attempted here. It may be said, however, that the recent formation of State Councils of the International Reading Association in Queensland, New South Wales, and Western Australia is a sign of increased reading interest; this interest should increase and should promote Australia-U.S.A. communication on this all-important subject.

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(Continued on Page 49)

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# What RESEARCH Says to the Reading Teacher

BY

**AGATHA TOWNSEND**

*Consultant, Educational Records Bureau*

## Helping the Gifted Reader

Five years ago Dr. Ruth Strang set out a challenge for all teachers of reading: "Most of the gifted group as a whole are reading up to the average of their grade or age but below their own inherent abilities. Many have not developed the maturity in reading of which they are capable" (10, p. 115). Implicit in these words is an urge for further research, not only on the status of the gifted pupil and the able reader, but also on methods and programs for improving the instruction of these young people.

In fact, several reports published in the years since 1955 include important suggestions for the identification of these pupils in the reading program and for the attention to their reading needs that may eventually improve the situation to which Dr. Strang refers. The studies summarized here include inferences on the nature of giftedness and its relation to reading achievement, the relation of intelligence to various aspects of beginning reading instruction, the use of reading materials and accessory methods, and the characteristic performance demanded for mature reading. Resources for the

teacher of the gifted have also been noted.

Barbe and Waterhouse (4) underline the need for research in the improvement of instruction. Their study of the effectiveness of homogeneous grouping in grades 4 to 6 reports increments for pupils whose initial levels of reading varied widely. On the basis of Gates Reading Survey scores the authors estimated that pupils whose original placement was high made lower gains, in the experimental interval, than those attained by pupils whose initial level was low. Here, if it were needed, is a further cue that we may be incorrect in identifying the lowest groups, only as those most needing special attention.

The research just cited dealt with groups in grades where reading is already well established. Studies by Anderson, Hughes, and Dixon (1,2) of long-term relationships between intelligence and reading suggest that potentially gifted readers may be performing somewhat differently from their less-gifted classmates even very early in their lives. While the relationship of first-grade IQ and age of learning to read may not be high enough for individual predic-

tion, there is nevertheless a clear general tendency for the highest children in this group, which had a median (Stanford-Binet) IQ of over 120, to learn early and achieve well in later grades. This study followed the high-level pupils through Grade 6. Among the most interesting findings of this set of investigations is that the usual differential in rate of initial reading progress for boys and girls seems to disappear when all are of high verbal ability.

How can the reading teacher best use this potential of the able pupil (and abuse it least)? Four studies of considerable stature reveal both positive and negative effects of methods used with superior children. Mills (7) studied the teaching of word recognition to pupils in the primary grades, presenting brief periods of instruction by visual, phonic, and kinesthetic methods, and by a combination of methods. Significantly, he found that the brightest pupils were able to acquire words readily by almost any method, but that visual methods proved somewhat superior to kinesthetic for these groups. The queries that remain in the mind of the reviewer are probably obvious. Are we depending too much on the ability of the bright child to work alone? Does his obvious progress lead us to stop in a search for methods which might be unusually effective in helping him?

It may be said that several studies emphasize the need for at least thorough, methodical attention to the able pupils. Another study by Anderson and his collaborators (3)

explored the results of using individualized, but somewhat informal, methods of instruction for laboratory school pupils of high ability. When their progress was compared with that of a group with an average IQ about ten points lower, it was found that the "lower" pupils made more rapid progress by following a well-planned, systematic, though somewhat more traditional program. The high ability of the laboratory school pupils did not alone suffice to assure that they should be more rapid in learning to read.

The conclusion is inescapable that we must continue to search for methods which may be unusually effective with the unusually able. In too many studies the high achievement of the bright pupil seems more closely related to his ability than to our effort. A study by Wilson and Leavell (12) using reading rate accelerators and tachistoscopic training found that method was relatively incidental to progress, while level of IQ was closely related to progress of tenth graders. Like the study by Mills already cited, this seems to be more evidence that ability makes for growth, while teaching scarcely interrupts the speed or direction of that trend.

The teacher has every reason to be dissatisfied with such a poor opinion of his efforts. While it is true that this five years of research does not offer much encouragement to him, it should be pointed out that those investigations which single out the able reader for study do find the gifted reader is capable and worthy

of help. And at least two reports have implications for the teacher who realizes he should be more active than passive in his role.

Saxton (9) makes a report which is of unusual interest because it represents an attempt to assess the possibility of freeing the pupil from those parts of routine which may have become burdensome. His study asked superior fifth-graders to evaluate a regular basal reader from the stand point of interest, and he further measured the need (or lack of it) which the pupils showed for work in the basic reading skills which were covered in the text. It appeared that the able children were interested in the content. It appeared, moreover, that although the superior readers had mastered the skills needed for the text, they nevertheless varied widely as individuals. The findings of Saxton's study led Dr. Constance McCullough, in reviewing the research, to make certain comments which are especially pertinent: "Would all the skills be maintained throughout the year if the superior readers should forego basal instruction? Is the skillful superior reader at fifth-grade level a finished product? Are there values in group study of the basal stories that are important to all children? There is considerable evidence in the research literature that skills may deteriorate if not systematically maintained. Studies involving diagnostic tests . . . do not support the finding that high scorers on survey tests have all the supporting skills they would learn at grade level" (6, p. 100).

A further suggestion that high-level reading demands great skill, and the implication that such skills can be taught, occur in a report by Piekarz (8). In working with superior sixth-graders, she stresses the high level of thinking, as well as reading, required for mature interpretation. She also, through the reports of two individuals of similar intelligence and general reading ability, shows how greatly even "high" pupils can differ in their ability to comprehend and interpret challenging material.

The material itself is also necessary, of course. The concluding reference in this column may well be to a Claremont College Conference report made in 1957 (5). This report has a valuable section listing literature specially suited for use with the gifted pupil.

The research published in this last five years has not yet answered Dr. Strang's challenge. It should, obviously, be answered by other studies of a controlled character, and by many additional reports. The results cannot be left to chance.

A final quotation from Strang and Bracken repeats the dangers and the rewards of our work, and reiterates the importance of direct action in it. "If the gifted children in a class are identified early, the development of poor attitudes and habits of reading and study may be avoided. The teacher should try to give them free time to read, suitable reading material, as much instruction and guidance as they need, and encouragement to use their ability . . . they do

need skillful guidance and instruction. Important as interest and motivation are, a teacher needs to do more than merely 'make the pupils happy and surround them with books.' Such a theory can be detrimental even to able readers" (11, p. 77).

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This essential foundation can be assured if, from the earliest stages of instruction, children are taught to 1) think of a word that makes sense in a given context and 2) apply phonetic principles whenever they come across a word they have not seen before. Here is a simple and reliable technique which will enable them to figure out practically any word they meet in print—provided that word is familiar in its spoken form.

In our experience as publishers of a basal series of elementary school readers we have had striking proof of the wisdom of such a method. The McKee **READING FOR MEANING** Series for Preprimary through Grade Six trains pupils to bring letters to life and use context clues and phonetic clues to become truly *independent readers*.

Our materials are unequalled for developing basic reading skills and for arousing interest in reading. The illustrations are superb, and the manuals bring the teacher up-to-date on theory and provide a wealth of helpful teaching ideas.

*Reading for meaning* is a skill all pupils must have—and **READING FOR MEANING** is the one Series that insures the attainment of this goal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John T. Lyte". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large initial 'J'.

JOHN T. LYTE

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## What Other Magazines Say About READING

BY

**MURIEL POTTER LANGMAN**

*Eastern Michigan University and Hawthorn Center, Northville, Michigan*

FILBIN, ROBERT, and STEFAN VOGEL. "Semantics for American Schools." *Elementary English*, December, 1959.

A brief article pointing out the relationship between the development of expectancy of the meaning of communication and such areas as interpersonal relationships, world politics, and critical thinking and reading. This article is itself a very important communication to all thoughtful teachers.

WITTY, PAUL, ET AL. "A Tenth Yearly Study and Comments on a Decade of Televiewing." *Elementary English*, December, 1959.

These writers summarize the pros and cons of TV viewing from a ten-year study. It appears that television values depend on adult guidance of children just as do the values of most other educational experiences.

PERRODIN, ALEX F. "Televiewing, Reading Habits and Children's Social Values." *Elementary English*, February, 1960.

This article reports a study of 352 children in an elementary school in a Southern city of 30,000 population. The Behavior Preference Record, assessing the traits *cooperation*, *friendliness*, *leadership* and *responsibility*, was administered to children in the fourth through seventh grades. From a personal data sheet information was ob-

tained about the number of hours spent per week by each child watching TV, with a statement of program preferences; information on the number of non-textbooks read from September through April; and number of comic books read per week, with preferences. The California Reading Test was used to provide information about reading achievement levels.

Relationships were examined among these variables. Among the conclusions drawn from the data are these: Children who read fewest books showed greater preference for non-cooperative, non-friendly, and non-responsible behavior. Children who viewed TV least showed greater preference for non-democratic forms of behavior. About 25 per cent of the children read ten or more comic books per week. There was a positive relationship between scoring below average in cooperation, friendliness, and responsibility, and a *dislike* (*italics mine*) of comic books. Poor scores on the traits measured were more frequent among children six months or more below grade placement in reading. Other interesting relationships make this study worth careful reading.

ZUCKER, MARILYN J. "Television: A Spur to Reading." *Elementary English*, January, 1960.

A description of how TV viewing has been used successfully to motivate language experiences and learnings.

SUTTON, RACHEL S. "Variations in Reading Achievement of Selected Children." *Elementary English*, February, 1960.

This article describes some aspects of a longitudinal study of reading development over a seven-year period. Teachers and parents cooperated with the study by responding to questionnaires. Two studies of individual children are briefly presented. Ten conclusions are reported. These on the whole support empirical findings. Two that are especially interesting are: "Precocity and slowness in reading may be detected early in the child's development" and "... prediction of future reading achievement for a given child is apt to be better if based on his past performance than on a statistical chance."

GROFF, PATRICK J. "Getting Started With Individualized Reading." *Elementary English*, February, 1960.

General methods for teaching and an evaluation of advantages and difficulties are realistically presented by this article. The point is made that, like other procedures, it is more congenial to, and therefore more effective for, some teachers than others, depending on their different personality structures. Like every other method advocated at some time in the history of American reading instruction, it is not a panacea, but rather one more resource among many.

VEATCH, JEANNETTE. "In Defense of Individualized Reading." *Elementary English*, April, 1960.

This article was written in response to Paul Witty's on the same subject which appeared in the same periodical in October, 1959. Among the interesting aspects of Dr. Veatch's comment is a list of eleven questions for further consideration and research, a review of pertinent research not covered by Dr. Witty, and description of some doctoral studies now in progress.

CASEY, JOHN E. "Test-Score Gains—A Yardstick for Teaching?" *Elementary School Journal*, February, 1960.

This article considers reading test scores and their usefulness. It should be carefully read because it clearly relates test score variations to the nature of tests, and explains the causes of test score variation from test to test, two points of test interpretation which trouble teachers sorely. The omission of information about the reliability of improvement scores on reading tests is commented upon. (Lack of information about the significance of the size of increments of gain in test scores is also frustrating. When is a gain in score indicative of genuine improvement? Shall we take seriously a gain of .1 of a grade? Or .3? Is an increment of gain equally meaningful when it represents an increase in a group mean, and when it represents a score gain for a single child? We hope more test makers and publishers will include this information in manuals, as a few already do. MPL) As the author of this article points out, another problem is the difficulty of constructing reading tests so that differences in score from grade to grade represent equal increments of difficulty in the test and progress in the score. Some suggestions

are made to constructors of reading tests.

GOLDSTEIN, AVRAM. "Does Homework Help? A Review of Research." *Elementary School Journal*, January, 1960.

This extremely useful and long awaited (by me, at least) article points out discrepancies between actual findings in research studies on the value of homework, and the interpretations and implications of such findings as set forth by the experimenters. Since this seems to be a decade of evaluation in both attitudes and methods in education, it seems worth while to ponder on a quotation from the conclusions in this article: "Statements that homework contributes little or nothing to immediate academic achievement are not warranted by the experimental findings. On the contrary, the data in most of the studies suggest that regularly assigned homework favors higher academic achievement . . ." The recommendations for the use of homework set forth by the writer are moderate, sensible, and pedagogically sound.

ENTWISLE, DORIS R. "Evaluations of Study-Skills Courses: A Review." *Journal of Educational Research*, March, 1960.

This article analyzes and summarizes the results of selected studies in its field as far back as 1935. The bibliography contains thirty-eight items. It will be very interesting and useful to workers in the area of college reading improvement.

PAUK, WALTER J. "Are Present Reading Tests Valid for Both Boys and Girls?" *Journal of Educational Research*, March, 1960.

The relationship between the differential rate in anatomical and physiological development of boys and girls, and the differences in reading achievement found between them, with particular reference to the much greater number of boys who are poor readers in clinical samples, is examined by this experimenter through a study of ninth graders. The best and poorest reading achievers in each sex group were given a battery of twenty-eight tests, a number of which were found to be significantly intercorrelated with the reading criterion. These were used in further statistical analysis. The group of significant traits included temperament, study habits and attitudes, numerical aptitude, abstract reasoning, spelling, sentences (the last four from the Differential Aptitude Tests), and the L score from the ACE Psychological Examination.

The astonishing results seem to indicate that reading success has different components for boys and for girls. ". . . the language tests . . . contributed 80.90 per cent to the total test battery in differentiating the above- and below-average girl readers; whereas the same language type tests contributed only 37.49 per cent to the total test battery in differentiating the above- and below-average boy readers." Moreover, the abstract reasoning and numerical ability tests contributed only 11.57 per cent to the differentiation of the above- and below-average girl readers, while they contributed 43.28 per cent to the differentiation of the above- and below-average boy readers. The experimenter wisely suggests further research before formulating ex-

planations and implications.

KARLIN, ROBERT. "Research in Reading." *Elementary English*, March, 1960.

A concise review of findings in research on the topics of Reading Readiness, Phonics, Interests, Comics and Television, Content Fields, Individualized Reading, and Machines. Its conciseness points up how much is still to be learned and how much research is needed.

WORTH, WALTER H., and SHORES, J. HARLAN. "Does Nonpromotion Improve Achievement in the Language Arts?" *Elementary English*, January, 1960.

This study compared sixty-six low achievers who had not been promoted and had repeated third grade with an equal number of low achievers who had been promoted to fourth grade. The groups were matched for sex, IQ, chronological age, and achievement. An analysis was made of teachers' procedures in working with these children, and no difference was found in the amount of time and the methods used at the two grade levels.

Using statistical means of evaluating the gains made by each group on eight reading and language skills tests, the experimenters found that the promoted group had gained significantly over the nonpromoted group in reading vocabulary and total reading. In paragraph reading the decision favored the nonpromoted. In reading comprehension, mechanics of English, spelling, total language, and word recognition there were no significant differences. Thus there was inconsistency in the

gains measurable for the two groups. Perhaps more important than these findings, in all eight aspects of the language arts measured for each group the gains were less than the ten-month gains normally expected for pupils on the standardized tests used. The experimenters hazard some interpretation of the inconsistencies in gains revealed by the tests. They relate some of these to possible errors of measurement, but suggest that different tests of the same name may actually measure different aspects of the reading process, and cite as an example the different kinds of items on different tests purporting to measure "word recognition."

In concluding that nonpromotion was no more effective than promotion in meeting the instructional needs of these non-achievers, the writers point out that neither promotion nor nonpromotion was effective. They suggest the development of more flexible curricula, special methods and materials, more individualized instruction—in short, the improvement of instruction for these children instead of the use of placement in one or another grade-level as a remedy in itself.

GRAY, WILLIAM S. "Summary of Investigations Relating to Reading, July 1, 1958 to June 30, 1959." *Journal of Educational Research*, February, 1960.

This extremely useful summary and bibliography is always welcomed. Headings under which summaries appear are: Specific Aspects of Reading, Sociology of Reading, Physiology and Psychology of Reading, and Teaching of Reading.

# Interesting BOOKS for the Reading Teacher

BY

**HARRY T. HAHN**

*Oakland County Schools, Michigan*

## Standards of Excellence

*Standards for School Library Programs.* THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL LIBRARIANS. American Library Association, 40 E. Huron Street, Chicago 11, Illinois. Pp. 132. \$2.50.

At a time when much thought and study are being given to methods of improving the curriculum it is most fortunate that the school library standards committee, representing a large number of professional organizations, has released this extensive and detailed guide for the development of dynamic school library programs. Since it is indeed the right of every boy and girl in a democratic society to have learning resources readily accessible, these resources and the library program that implements their use is and must be a fundamental part of the education of youth.

This paper-bound book presents the basic requirements for a functional library program for the use of school boards, school administrators, teachers, librarians, and parents. The standards establish a high level of excellence in formulating immediate and long-term plans for school library programs. The text belongs on every educator's must-read list.

## Award Winning Books

The two new award-winning children's books for 1959 were announced last spring. The Newberry Award went to *Onion John*, by Joseph Krumbold. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1959. \$3.00. *Onion John*, the unusual friend of young Andy Rush, hung rocks on his apple tree to shame the tree into growing large apples. He was successful, too. John's many interesting ideas made sense to Andy but not to Andy's father. This is a warm, human, wonderful story told with humor and compassion. Mr. Krumbold received a similar award in 1954 for his *And Now Miguel*.

The Caldecott Award went to *Nine Days to Christmas*, by Marie Hall Ets and Aurora Labastida, illustrated by Marie Hall Ets. New York: Viking, 1959. \$3.25. This beautifully illustrated story tells of a small Mexican girl's exciting experiences in celebrating the Christmas season.

## A Resource for High School Teachers

*Teaching Reading in the High School*, Kansas Studies in Education, Vol. 10, No. 1, February 1960. Edited by Oscar M. Haugh. Lawrence, Kan-

## COMPLETE



### **Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl**

One of the most powerful literary documents of our time, now available complete and in the author's own words in an exclusive school edition. Photographs from the motion picture, an appreciative preface and useful question material—found only in this special Globe edition prepared by M. Lewittes.

### **The Call of the Wild — Jack London**

A dog's devotion—a strong man's courage—and the primitive frozen north as a setting in one of the greatest adventure stories of all time. Complete and unabridged, this Globe edition is supplemented by action photographs, maps, a glossary, and provocative question material arranged by Helen J. Hanlon.

## ABRIDGED

### **The Good Earth — Pearl S. Buck**

This Nobel-Prize-winning novel has been abridged to remove portions of the original which would prevent its use in the average classroom. The School Edition is illustrated and provided with helpful teaching aids by Dr. J. E. Greene.

## ADAPTED

### **STORIES FOR TEEN-AGERS — Book 1 and Book 2**

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**GLOBE BOOK COMPANY** 175 Fifth Avenue, New York 10, N.Y.

sas: School of Education, University of Kansas. Pp. 46. No charge.

This pamphlet should prove most interesting to many secondary teachers who have been seeking specific information regarding reading skills and methods for teaching them in language arts, social studies, science, mathematics, and industrial arts. It contains many good ideas and is well edited.

### A New Creative Language Arts Program

STAUFFER, RUSSELL G., and BURROWS, ALVINA TREUT. "The Winston Communication Program." Philadelphia: John C. Winston, 1960.

When you have an opportunity to examine the new Winston Communication Program this year, take a good look. It is not merely another set of readers and English books for children. It is a creative, imaginative program which is certain to make a significant contribution to the teaching of the language arts.

Two master teachers and scholars have combined their talents to design an ambitious program which should provide for systematic guidance of children in all phases of the language arts. The entire communication program has been correlated so that each phase of instruction in speaking, reading, and writing augments the others. Thus far, it is apparent that they have done a tremendous job.

The Communication Program will eventually consist of the "Winston Basic Readers," "American English Series," and the "Winston Associate Readers" for Grades 1 - 6. The basic readers and English series for the

primary grades were released early this year.

The American English series at present consists of:

Grade 1	<i>American English, Book 1</i>	\$1.20
Grade 2	<i>American English, Book 2</i>	1.20
Grade 3	<i>American English, Book 3</i>	2.40

Books 1 and 2 are very large, attractive workbooks providing needed space for big drawings and uninhibited writing. Book 3 has a hard cover. All three have informative teacher's editions and, like the readers, can be used separately from the other series in this program.

The English series integrates composition, talking and listening, reading, literature, dramatics, spelling and handwriting. Teachers who used Book 1 this spring reported enthusiastically on the many creative activities included throughout the book. They were particularly pleased with the teacher's edition which provided many ideas for helping individuals grow in self-expression.

Although it may not be evident at first glance, the English program has incorporated the sequential development of spelling skills, word-study methods, mastery of validated lists, and the development of spelling in composition.

The basic readers consist of:

Reading Readiness —		
	<i>Big Pictures for Ready to Go</i>	\$6.60
	<i>Ready to Go</i>	.63
	<i>Ready to Read</i>	.63
Pre-Primers	<i>Come Here</i>	.42
	<i>Stop and Look</i>	.45
	<i>Go Up</i>	.54
Primer	<i>Come With Me</i>	1.59
Grade 1	<i>Away We Go</i>	1.71
Grade 2	<i>Friends All About</i>	1.89
Grade 2	<i>People on Parade</i>	1.92
Grade 3	<i>Into the Wind</i>	2.01
Grade 3	<i>Across the Valley</i>	2.04

The program includes teachers' editions, studybooks, word cards, cut-outs, and pupil word-card holders.

Some of the problems of teaching reading with basic reading materials are treated in the teacher guides. For example, careful guidance in the pre-primers and primers is not a sacred idea. In fact, the authors describe in detail how experience stories and charts might be interchanged with these first readers. Further, it is suggested that once children have advanced to the point where they are instructional at the first-reader level consideration should be given to self-selection or individualized reading as an important part of this instructional program.

Unique features of this program are the two plans for developing and using the basic readers. A comprehensive plan for basic reading instruction is provided for those who are interested primarily in group work. However, for those who want to include experience stories and charts, as well as individualized reading, a modified basic approach is described. The authors advocate the latter plan.

Emphasis in the reading program is placed upon the idea that reading is a thinking process and that skills for critical thinking can be taught. The story material has been structured so that each page has its own unity, although there is a central story theme. The illustrations have been carefully prepared to play an important part in the development of the plot. With these structured stories boys and girls are directed to establish their own purposes for reading. They are motivated to size up the situation on each page

and take full advantage of all the thinking clues. They are encouraged to predict what will follow and then to find evidence to support their own ideas. These are some of the important first steps in this reading-thinking program.

Fundamental to the instructional program is the concept that teaching is not telling. Children are *not* told what new words will be introduced in each story. Instead, they are given the opportunity to employ all of the word-attack skills they have learned and to discover how to expand their own vocabularies.

It would be impractical to review all of the many interesting features of this series, but the materials deserve careful study and thoughtful consideration.

### Wonderful Stories

SHANE, HAROLD G., and HESTER, KATHLEEN. *Gateways to Reading Treasures*, Co-Basal Library Readers. River Forest, Illinois: Laidlaw Brothers, 1960.

<i>Tales to Read, Primer</i>	\$1.72
<i>Stories to Remember, Book 1</i>	1.72
<i>Storyland Favorites, Book 2</i>	2.32
<i>Doorways to Adventure, Book 3</i>	2.48

These two capable authors have assembled many wonderful stories on a wide variety of themes. They have selected colorful and appealing illustrations and placed them in attractive bindings. The stories, presented in bold, readable print with wide margins, seem certain to capture and sustain the interest of primary children.

This literary series was prepared for use as a co-basal, thus implying that the books could be used to motivate children to extend their reading skills

through good literature following the completion of the various basic readers. To do this the authors correlated the vocabularies in these books with the vocabularies in the leading basic readers. They expect that children will have little difficulty with the words once they have completed comparable levels in the basic program. The stories, therefore, can be used to provide for the further development of creative reading skills and wholesome attitudes towards reading.

Most publishers provide supplementary readers to extend their reading programs; but few are as rich, varied, and helpful as this one. As with the other supplementary series, it is suggested that they be used immediately following the completion of a basal reader or as a review at the beginning of the school year.

It may be of interest to note that generous use is made of the rebus in the lower levels of this series. The rebus, a picture of an object to represent words or ideas, is designed to reduce the reading vocabulary and add interest to the stories. There is ample evidence that the rebus achieves these goals in these books.

### A New Parents' Handbook

*How to Help Your Child in School*, A Handbook for Parents of Children in Kindergarten through Grade 6. Published by the Department of Elementary School Principals and The National School Public Relations Association, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N. W., Washington 6, D. C. Pp. 40, \$.50.

Parents can and should continue to play an important role in their child's

education after their boy or girl enters school. This well written and informative handbook gives fathers and mothers specific clues as to the part they might play.

The pamphlet describes briefly but effectively what the school is trying to do in teaching reading, spelling, arithmetic, science, social studies, art and music, foreign languages, and physical education. It also endeavors to explain the purposes of homework and report cards. Following the introduction of each school subject, specific suggestions are listed in capsule form describing ways parents can help at home. The advice is sound and helpful.

This handbook is the fourth in a fine series of parent guides which include: *Happy Journey*, *Janie Learns to Read*, and *Sailing Into Reading*. Single copies of these pamphlets cost \$.50; discounts are provided for larger quantities.

### Perception

DIACK, HUNTER. *Reading and the Psychology of Perception*. Nottingham, England: Peter Skinner Publishing Co., 1960. Pp. 155 + 23. 21s. (Also New York: Philosophical Library. \$6.00).

This book consists mainly of arguments and experimental evidence for the superiority of the "modified phonic method" of teaching reading (used in the *Royal Road Readers* of Daniels and Diack) over "look-and-say" methods. It denounces the appeal to Gestalt psychology as providing a psychological basis for the latter in the form of the concept of words, rather than letters, as "meaningful wholes." Clearly this



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appeal is unjustified, although the author gives too prominent a place to his denunciation. Following a useful brief history of early methods of teaching reading, he describes experiments which demonstrate that a few quite young children could be taught to discriminate and remember particular details of shapes and words. From this he argues that children beginning to read naturally recognize words from certain letters, especially the first and last, and not from their "whole" shapes. Attempting to teach the latter is therefore futile. However, more experimentation on larger groups of children is needed to prove this. It is necessary for children to be taught to perceive letters, give their sounds, and combine these into word sounds. The author claims that the modified phonic method, teaching letter sounds in phonetically simple words, can enable even five-year-old children to begin real reading, without the necessity of "pre-reading" activities. This he has not in fact proved, although he and Daniels have demonstrated the efficacy of the method for teaching backward eight-year-olds. However, this book will be of great interest and value to all those who are interested in the psychology and teaching of reading.—M. D. VERNON, *The University, Reading, Berks, England.*

### Improving Reading-Study Skills in Social Studies

TIEGS, ERNEST W., and ADAMS, FAY. *Teaching Social Studies, A Guide to Better Citizenship.* New York: Ginn, 1959. Pp. 562. \$4.80.

It would seem appropriate to turn

to the writers of a popular series of social studies textbooks for advice and guidance on ways of helping young people develop important reading skills in this content area. The authors of this new text have provided elementary teachers with a valuable resource for making social studies a lively part of the school program.

An understanding of children with a full appreciation of their developmental needs is stressed throughout the book. No panaceas are offered, but there are many concrete illustrations of ways to solicit the attention and participation of all children — those with limited reading skills as well as those who are gifted.

An important part of the text is devoted to the nature and function of the unit of work in social studies. This is a topic which is apt to be confusing to some of the most experienced teachers. The text provides a lucid account of methods of organizing, developing, and evaluating units. In addition to examples given, two complete units, one at the primary and the other at the intermediate grade level, are included. This section is well written.

Much of the text is devoted to the extension and enrichment of reading and study skills, thinking and problem solving, building concepts, deriving insights and understanding, reading maps and globes, using audio-visual materials, and showing the contributions of art and music in teaching social studies. The suggestions throughout are practical and should prove most helpful when applied in the classroom program.

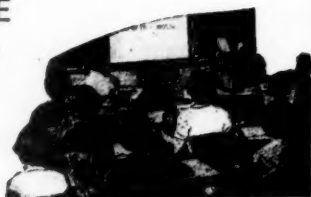
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## THE CLIP SHEET

Mary Elisabeth Coleman

University of Pennsylvania

### Magazines—Uses

Uses of magazines in the classroom are reported in a study by the Research Division for the Joint Committee of the NEA and Magazine Publishers Association—preliminary draft reported in *NEA Research Bulletin*, 38 (February, 1960), Research Division, National Education Association, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington 6, D. C. At the primary level the magazines are used chiefly for pictures, information is relayed to the pupils by the teacher. At intermediate and secondary levels teachers use magazines to teach study skills, to provide current information in social studies and science, and to stimulate interest in reading.

Lack of time and of money are cited by teachers as the chief obstacles to more extensive use of magazines for instruction. However, some teachers are overcoming these difficulties in a number of ways, which are described in this report.

### Magazines—List

To use magazines, one must have them, old copies and current ones. A comprehensive list of magazines available is *The Dobler International List of Periodicals for Boys and Girls*. This up-to-date catalogue gives addresses, names of editors, and other useful information. Periodicals are

listed under these headings: general, school, church and religious organizations, and foreign publications. You might pass on this information to teachers of foreign languages. They, too, find magazines important in their teaching. The list is available from: Muriel Fuller, Box 193, Grand Central Station, New York 17, New York.

### Magazines—New

Scholastic Magazines is expanding the scope of its news periodicals. Beginning in September, *News Pilot* will be published for grade one, *News Ranger* for grade two, and *News Trail* for grade three, together with a teacher edition for each level. To guide in the preparation of the new weeklies, seven consultants, familiar to members of IRA, have been added to the editorial staff: A. Sterl Artley, Mary C. Austin, Genevieve Anderson Hoyt, Nancy Larrick, Paul McKee, Nila B. Smith, and J. Wayne Wrightstone. Scholastic Magazines, 33 West 42nd Street, New York 36, New York.

### More Foreign Language

The fifth catalogue of the Package Library of Foreign Children's Books, a project sponsored by the American Library Association, is now available. A package of books may be ordered in Danish, French, Ger-

man, Italian, Polish, Spanish, or Swedish, or a package of books in several languages may be ordered. Books may also be bought separately. A copy of the catalogue is available from Package Library of Children's Books, 69-71 Groton Street, Forest Hills 75, New York.

### Beginners

Start your readers early! As a help in locating books judged to be of first-grade level in reading difficulty, check with a list of over four hundred easy-to-read books compiled by Patrick Groff, San Diego State College, San Diego, California. This is the first of a proposed annual listing. To get a copy, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope and thirty cents to Mr. Groff. Remember to send an envelope of appropriate size.

### Awards

Most of you know that Joseph Krumboltz was given the John Newberry Medal for *Onion John* and that the Randolph Caldecott Medal was awarded to Marie Hall Ets for *Nine Days to Christmas*. Less publicity has been given to the runners-up, but you will want to consider them for your school library. For the John Newberry Medal: Jean George for *My Side of the Mountain*, Gerald Johnson for *America Is Born*, and Carol Kendall for *The Gammage Cup*. For the Caldecott Medal: Adrienne Adams, illustrator for *Houses from the Sea*, by Alice E. Goudey; and Maurice Sendak, illustrator for *Moon Jumpers*, by Janice May Udry.

### Career Information

Every teacher or librarian should serve as a recruiting officer when he sees an able young man or woman who would be an asset to the profession. To acquaint a student with opportunities in teaching, you might hand him *Invitation to Teaching*, revised, 1960, National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards, NEA, 1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington 6, D. C., \$0.10. You might also offer *Teaching As A Career*, which goes into some detail about opportunities, 1959, Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C. The prospective librarian may be helped by *Your Career As A Librarian*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 425 N. Michigan Avenue, Chicago 11, Illinois, a single copy free.

Free or inexpensive material to be used in high school classes reading about career choices is listed in the *NEA Journal* for March, 1960. This material has high interest value for pupils for whom high school is a terminal program. It may be used for practice in reading for detail, in selecting topic sentences, in finding the author's organization, in skimming, or for practice in summarizing.

*Truck Farming* is the latest unit in the Rochester Occupational Reading Series. As with the other units in this series, the material is available on three reading levels. Further information is available from Syracuse University Press, University Station Box 87, Syracuse 10, New York.

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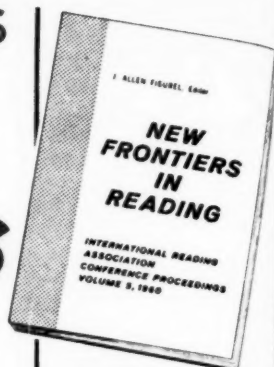
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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

BY

**MARY C. AUSTIN**

*President, International Reading Association*

**B**ECAUSE this report is being written early in June, I have not yet slipped the presidential mantle around my shoulders. That I will do so on July 1 with humbleness is understandable. Five outstanding leaders have served as presidents of the IRA before me—Dr. William S. Gray, Dr. Nancy Larrick, Dr. Albert J. Harris, Dr. George D. Spache, and Dr. A. Sterl Artley—each of whom has contributed immeasurably to the development of our Association, which now numbers 10,585 members.

The rapid increase in membership of IRA since its formation on January 1, 1956, is a striking example that the Association is meeting the needs and expectations of reading teachers at all educational levels. Continued growth is evident in the addition of sixteen new councils between January 21 and May 1, 1960, two in Canada, thirteen in the United States, and one in Puerto Rico. May I extend a special welcome to these new councils, hoping that your first year will be particularly stimulating and satisfying.

Concerted efforts will be made to form new councils during 1960-1961, so that many more individuals can enjoy the professional stimulation provided by the Association. Toward this goal the Board has approved a new organizational pattern to insure

the future growth of IRA. In each state or province one person will be appointed to serve as the State or Province Organization Chairman. This individual will work closely with Dr. LaVerne Strong, IRA Organization Chairman, and Miss Dorothy Lampard, Canadian Co-Chairman. To encourage coordinated efforts in matters pertaining to membership and publicity, all communications from the IRA Membership Chairman, Dr. H. Alan Robinson, and the Publicity Chairman, Mrs. Dorothy Kendall Bracken, will be channeled to the State or Province Chairman also. Fortunately, increased responsibilities add to the stature and leadership role in IRA of the many dedicated individuals who are serving in this capacity. To them we express our deep appreciation.

And, speaking of increased responsibilities, are you aware that your Board has approved one additional copy of *THE READING TEACHER* for this year? Each IRA member will receive *five* issues with no increase in dues. Because you are now reading the September one, you may look forward to receiving others in November, January, March, and May, if your membership dues are paid for 1960-1961. Editor Russell G. Stauffer cherishes the hope



## UPON OUR WINDOWSILL

This strange creature (species: *birdus readibus*) stopped by our window the other day—his wings were drooping, his tail feathers frayed.

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that "each issue of *THE READING TEACHER* be discerningly accurate and well rendered." From past experience we know this hope has been attained. We look forward to an abundance of valuable material in each issue.

The size of the Association and the expansion of services rendered make the present location of the Chicago office inadequate for our current activities. Consequently, at the May meeting Dr. Artley appointed a Committee on Permanent Headquarters under the direction of Dr. Helen M. Robinson. The Committee will make recommendations regarding the acquisition of space, personnel, and equipment.

Dr. William D. Sheldon, President-Elect, is organizing co-sponsored meetings with the Educational Records Bureau, the National Council of Teachers of English, the National Council for Social Studies, AERA, AASA, and ASCD. He also hopes to arrange joint sessions with the Canadian Education Association and the National Elementary Principals.

The New York conference was a

tremendous success. Our congratulations are richly deserved by Dr. Artley and the speakers who provided an excellent program, and by Dr. Harris, Miss Dietrich, and their faithful committee members for an efficiently organized convention. At the Saturday luncheon Dr. McCallister reported that approximately 3,650 people were registered for the meetings.

Plans are already taking shape for the Sixth Annual Conference of IRA in St. Louis on May 4-6, 1961. Mr. Charles Humphrey will act as the Local Arrangements Chairman with Mrs. Hinda Dillinger as Co-Chairman. Miss Dorothy Dietrich has agreed to serve as Conference Consultant. Your suggestions for the conference — theme, program, participants, etc. — will be welcome whenever you have an opportunity to share them with me.

Yes, the year before us will be a busy one. May I invite you, however, to communicate with me if you have suggestions for improving the Association. By working together to accomplish our mutual aims we shall realize gratifying results sooner.

---

### Elva Knight Research Fund

Persons who need money to support reading research or pay publication costs of completed research are invited to apply for research grants from the ELVA KNIGHT RESEARCH FUND. Application forms for grants may be obtained by writing to Dr. Theodore Clymer, College of Education, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis 14, Minnesota.

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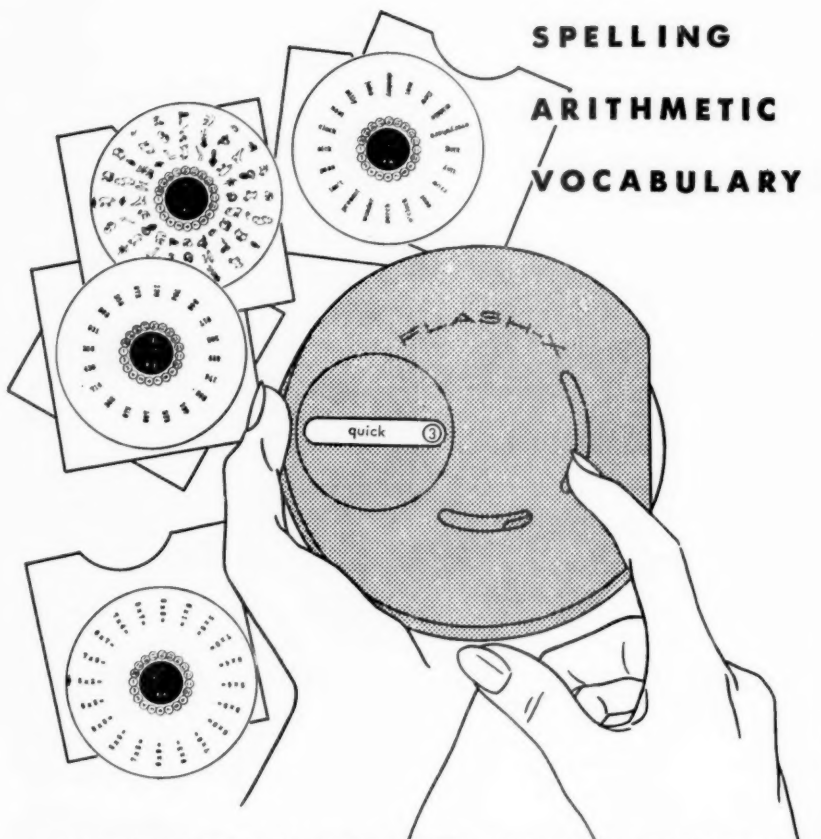
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